FOCUSING CORPORATE SINGING AS AN INTENTIONAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICE THAT CREATES SPACE FOR HOLY SPIRIT ENCOUNTER

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ABSTRACT

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Derby Global Methodist Church has experienced division over music style with a misplaced focus on performance and preference. This has created division with a lack of participation in the liturgical ritual of song. If members are exposed to a workshop experience focusing on spiritual formation through group singing, then they will exhibit a higher level of unity through the exposure to spiritual song and education. Data was collected through pre- project and post-project surveys, personal journals, post-project interviews and group discussion. Because the members engaged in the workshop experience, they reflected on a new focus of unified spiritual singing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My educational journey begins and ends with God as my Father, Jesus as my Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit as my guide through every mountain top and valley to seek out the tuning of grace in my life. I acknowledge that everything I have gained and will gain in the future leads back to the God who created me, died for me, loved me, and transformed me each day of this process. I acknowledge Blairsville First Methodist Church which formed me in Christian discipleship and gave me the confidence to follow God from my baptism to becoming an ordained elder in Christ's church. I specifically acknowledge Bob Graff for exemplifying genuine Christian leadership to me as a youth, and Kay Kelly who taught me to sing praises to the Lord in the Wesleyan Singers, and I am thankful for each person I sang beside in my first choir as a child.

I acknowledge my mentor at United Theological Seminary, Dr. Brian Law, for guiding me through this process and being supportive and a listening ear. I am forever grateful to Dr. Sue Nelson Kibbey for inviting me to be part of the Open the Floodgates Cohort as she saw something more in my call and story to be told. I acknowledge the fellow students of my cohort who lifted me in prayer and friendship during this process. I also wish to acknowledge Dr. Tesia Mallory, Dr. Kelly Mc Quaig, and Dr. Tracie Barrett for being professional associates for me, encouraging me to trust the process and to believe that I could do this doctorate work.

I acknowledge Derby Global Methodist Church for allowing me to share my research and work as I serve as their pastor, especially my site consultants Diane Tiffany and Mary Blackford for continued prayer and support.

Finally, I acknowledge my family for standing by me during these last few years. My husband, Reverend John Mize, the best partner in life and singing, for speaking and listening to my ideas, giving insight, and editing my work along the way. And my two daughters, Sydney and Sophie, who have believed in me and have encouraged me to never give up. I hope this work sings faith into each of your lives.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my parents Roy “Skip” and Lois Roberts Bennett. They sang hymns on each side of me in church for my first eighteen years and, and that made all the difference in my faith, my love for music, and my desire to sing to the Lord. Without their never wavering belief in my gifts, talents and artistic ability, I would never have become this person of confidence in the Lord. Because of their selfless love and guidance, and confidence in me, I was confident to sing His praises and share the gospel and be this woman of faith. They are no longer here with me to see this accomplishment, but I know they are with the Lord rejoicing in this moment.

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ABBREVIATIONS

GMC	Global Methodist Church
UMC	United Methodist Church
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RSPUMC	Roxbury St. Paul's United Methodist Church

Come Thou fount of every blessing
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace
Streams of mercy never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise

Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it
Mount of Thy redeeming love

-Robert Robertson

INTRODUCTION

> In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on.[1]

The calm assurance of God's providence allowed the Moravians to remain calm in the midst of a storm at sea which interrupted their worship on January 25, 1736. John Wesley, who was attending the worship, writes in his journal of the amazement of seeing the solidarity and assurance of the missionaries he had met and observed on his voyage to the American Colony. He noticed their gracious actions throughout the journey, and even in a harrowing experience that could bring death, their faith remained constant, as their song to the Lord continued. In unison the community sings their praise.

Singing in worship should always be a unified way to praise the Lord, despite what type of music, or what circumstance the congregation has experienced. God has given the gift of music to the church with the purpose of expressing praise through the words and music together in a shared experience of faith. Differences in style and preference has brought discontent within the modern church starting in the 20th century and still resonates well into the following century. This has resulted in division of

[1] W. Reginald Ward, and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley. Volume 18 Journal and Diaries I (1735-1738)* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 242.

believers and lack of participation in an integral spiritual practice of the gathered community.

This Doctor of Ministry work developed from division and unresolved conflict at Derby Global Methodist Church. The congregations were split which resulted in a substantial loss of membership that has brought the church in continued decline over a period of fourteen years. The desired outcome of the hypothesis proposes that through a process of reintroducing the focus of corporate singing back to its origins and intentional practice in worship, a gathering within a congregation can renew their dedication to this spiritual practice. The first chapter introduces the origination of the research of the context and intersects with the experience of the researcher that would navigate a proposal for change in corporate focus on singing.

Chapter Two examines the Biblical Foundations of Ephesians 5:15-20, a word of intentional faithful behavior in the Christian walk. The believer is reminded that choosing a way of wisdom includes taking notice of the time, and to be attentive to God's will. Focus on the world stands in the way of the corporate community to be filled with the Holy Spirit in the practice of singing various types of songs that are pleasing to God when sung in unity and faith. Throughout the study, singing together songs provides a new space for a united focus in singing as way to praise together and listen to each other's voices as the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are engaged allowing space for the Holy Spirit to fill the space and hearts of the corporate community.

Chapter Three explores the Historical Foundations of intentional spiritual practices originating from Pietist roots that brought spiritual awakening to Charles Wesley, who originated the practices that would lead to the Methodist movement that his

brother John and him would be led to share the gospel in England. The journey of Charles is a biography that explores his upbringing in the household of his mother Susanna, who planted the seeds of structured spiritual disciplines foundational to his faith and spiritual conversion. This information assists the corporate group to learn of the basic precepts of the movement that would be integral to the founding of their denominational membership, rooted in primitive Christianity, where singing of psalms carried over from the Jewish tradition and morphed into singing in sanctuaries on Sunday mornings.

In Chapter Four, lyrical theology continues the story of the Methodist movement and its hymnody. Lyrical theology, the study of expressing belief through the poetry of songs of worship, is investigated and applied to the theological accuracy of corporate singing. This foundation defined the beliefs of the early followers of the Methodist movement through the hymnody that was written, taught, and sung in all meetings and gatherings of the 18th century movement. The lyrical accuracy of faith was being taught from a deeply rooted Biblical foundation and was transformative for the corporate communities that emerged beyond the movement. Emphasis on this foundation resets the focus of singing in worship as a way of communicating what is essential belief expressed as a spiritual practice of the community.

Chapter Five provides the interdisciplinary focus of ritual theory applied to a group that gathers and participates in activities of faith. The effect of ritual activity is examined as a useful study that can be applied specifically to the place of corporate worship. The physiological activity of individuals changes within a community as different ritual practices are performed. In a worship space when a community sings in unison these actions of ritual are proven to unite the individuals into a group that draws

on the same faith and devotion. This foundation emphasizes the power that community can possess when uniting together and singing with common faith. This knowledge will bring together the foundational elements actively drawing common participants together in spiritual growth and unity through the study.

Chapter Six describes the implementation of the foundational work into a six-week study, “Sing Your Praise to the Lord”, that was developed and presented in a workshop format to the participants of Derby GMC. The intention was to bring corporate singing back to a unified focus and purpose. Each chapter connects the study to refocus faithful singing in a corporate setting as a means of tuning into God and grace with one another and in unified praise. The tuning principle is carried throughout the work and is experienced in the end result. The desired new intentional focus is intended to allow space for the work of God through the Holy Spirit to fill the community and bring new movement.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Worship plays a significant role in nurturing disciples; it is where old and new believers collectively encounter God and grace, however, this cannot happen without the work of the Holy Spirit. The elements of worship should fit together so that worshippers can praise, pray, contemplate, and experience grace while inviting the Holy Spirit to move and unite all who gather.

The Methodist movement during the eighteenth century was not the inception of a new church but was birthed from a spiritual awakening where two brothers encountered the assurance of grace amidst the most broken time in their lives. John Wesley (1703-1791) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788) were ordained ministers in the Church of England who had studied at Oxford. They were holy men who practiced a methodology of their faith and approached it daily with order, service, and follow through, stabilizing a spiritual foundation where the Holy Spirit changed their hearts.

One significant element in these young men of God was the spiritual foundation they received from their mother, Susanna Wesley (1669-1742). Susanna instilled in her nine children a foundation of spiritual practice of prayer and song to God. Before they could speak, they were taught to pray; then they learned the Lord's prayer and how to sing the psalms. This foundation would lead them to a place where the Holy Spirit would meet them as adults to assure them of grace and salvation when needed.

At a significant point that would change these brothers, Charles became sick with pleurisy, so John and a couple friends stopped to see him and sang a hymn and prayed to the Holy Spirit for healing. Later in the evening, he experienced a movement of the Holy Spirit that assured him of God's grace through Jesus Christ. His brother, John, would have a similar experience at Aldersgate Street on May 24, 1738, at a prayer meeting. He wrote in his journal: "While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

This doctoral work investigated the practice of singing hymns and spiritual songs as a means of spiritual formation. The study explored into a deliberate approach of spiritual practice and how it can create a space for encountering the Holy Spirit. Additionally, it examined how the consistent foundation of continual prayer and song as an intentional practice has led to awakening and revival in the church. The research focused on how the intentional practice of the Holy Spirit and God's work can bring healing and revival to the church.

Introduction

This chapter will examine the ministry context of Derby Global Methodist Church in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The church community worships weekly, and this chapter will explore the music ministry and how the pastor's music experience can be an asset to healing conflict within the hymnody and singing of the church. The information shared in this chapter will also provide a foundation for a Doctor of Ministry Project that

focuses on corporate singing and spiritual formation. The chapter introduces a focus on intentional singing as a spiritual practice to provide the church community with unity and a new perspective to invite Holy Spirit activity and growth.

Context

Derby Global Methodist Church is located in the Roxbury neighborhood of the city of Johnstown, which sits in the southeastern part of Western Pennsylvania. Johnstown is positioned in a valley of the Laurel Mountains and thrived before and after the famous Johnstown Flood, which devastated the city in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Many jobs provided work and security for a dense Slavic immigrant population as the city contributed to an industrial steel giant. Unfortunately, the city suffered in the last quarter of the twentieth century as the steel mills closed and jobs were lost, resulting in an economic downfall for the town. The area has never recovered from this financial loss and the population is now reduced by two-thirds of what it was during the steel boom.

Roxbury UMC and St. Paul's UMC separately represented two different congregations that merged to become one faith community in 1994. The two faith communities named Roxbury and St. Paul's existed a mile apart in an active area that thrived, situated on a commuter rail line that brought people through the town, to visit an amusement park, lake, and popular community entertainment center. The park that housed the entertainment center remains, but the rail cars are long gone, and the community is much less populated in the twenty-first century. The two congregations merged in 1994 to become one faith community named Roxbury St. Paul's United Methodist Church. In the summer of 2023, the church changed its name from Roxbury St.

Paul's United Methodist Church to Derby Global Methodist Church due to disaffiliation and a denominational change.

Yet even with the economic downfall of the city of Johnstown in the late 1970s-80s, at the loss of the thriving steel industry, the faith community that merged in the nineties was still strong, 150-160 members attended weekly at the turn of the century. Prayer groups were common within the congregation, and there were seven lively Sunday School classes to choose from. The youth ministry was active, and two young people from the church community had even followed the call into ordained ministry.

The laity still played a significant role in the church's fabric, as lay servants took part in leading worship, which harkened back to the origins of the congregations that emerged from revival tents and were served on a circuit by a riding circuit preacher. The twenty-first-century church was firm in its faith formation and corporate worship. In 2007, a second worship was proposed and implemented so that different worship styles and music could be appreciated as a faith community.

The division of worship eventually led to power struggles with the leadership and the direction of prayer between the worship band leader and the pastor. Trust was lost, and worship suffered, leading to a divide in the church. Long-time members left with the band leader, and the weekly worship numbers eventually decreased to one-third of the regular attendance. The live band part of the contemporary worship service was replaced with praise song videos as a temporary fix until the musicians could be replaced, but this work was never done. The traditional worship service also lost key leadership in the direction the choir, and a member stepped into the role temporarily, but a permanent solution for the music program was never revisited.

The outcome was two worship services lacking a clear focus on music and prayer. This led to a division within the corporate community, resulting in a loss of unity and subsequent suffering. Prayer was absent for two years in the contemporary service, while creeds and confessions were omitted from the traditional one. Eventually, this problem led to complacency, causing people to accept the status quo in their weekly worship.

The first step in fixing these divisions happened as a result of the pandemic that was experienced throughout the world in the spring of 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic spread quickly, and by the fall of that same year the county that housed the church scored highest in the nation of those infected with the virus. In-person worship was not possible due to recommendations to stay in place and not gather in Western Pennsylvania, and services moved to be broadcast online. The online worship service brought together a dwindling congregation during an unusual season. When worship resumed, it was decided this was the time to proceed with only one worship service, blended in style, to become united as a faith community. As the church resumed in-person worship, blended option of music was offered, combining traditional and contemporary formats. As a result, the faith community worshipped together weekly instead of being divided, but attendance suffered at its lowest in its collective history. This became a consequence that many churches experienced as a result of the pandemic.

In order to address discipleship and growth, the leadership met in the spring of 2023 to study and discuss class meetings and the origins of the Wesleyan movement, which is the collective history of the denominations that were part of the revivals and movement of Christianity starting in the nineteenth century contributing to many denominations with the Wesleyan and Methodist names. The goal was to renew and

revive the ministry and membership of the church by focusing on basic discipleship that thrived through small groups of accountability. Incidentally, the church's mission statement was "To make, nurture and multiply disciples."

Additionally in light of the need to gather and be in fellowship in the early days of the lockdowns from COVID-19, with the inability to do so, an idea came from a member of the prayer group with a desire to pray Psalm 91 at the homes of members from a safe distance. This vision was led with a desire to pray for protection for the church and community families during the uncertainty of the pandemic that the whole world was experiencing. The prayer group that emerged from a study started in the fall of 2019 implemented this project to bring unity and community. The small group of was inspirited by a book on breakthrough prayers by Sue Nilson Kibbey[1] and bonded through a new fellowship that became connected through prayer. This group planned to share a vision of prayerful breakthrough and desired to encourage the church community in early 2020. The plan was interrupted mid-March of 2020 by the mandatory closing down of in-person worship but was not halted as the fellowship, led by the Holy Spirit. found a new way to continue the breakthrough project as they improvised through the safe visits outside.

The prayer group called "The Psalm 91 Project", continued to pray and meet as they could through Zoom and were able to meet in person to pray for the church and each other, continuing to lead in breakthrough practices of prayer within the congregation and beyond the doors into the local area. The movement of this ministry led to growth in the

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[1] Sue Nilson Kibbey, *Ultimate Reliance: Breakthrough Prayer Practices for Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2019).

lay servant ministry of the church as the church opened its doors again post pandemic, and new people joined as new classes were offered for church laity in the area. As a result, the new lay servants engaged in added ministries, which included a Bible Study held off-site, a game night, and a ministry study about class meetings and the importance of small group ministry. Amidst the new outreach and discipleship, the music remained an unfulfilled concern of the congregation. Everyone is together at one time, yet something is missing.

The practice of combining prayer and music has been a cherished tradition for a very long time. However, simply replacing the current style of music with another is not a feasible solution. The church needs to embrace a new focus that allows for diverse styles of music to be sung during worship and appreciated together. By restoring the purpoe of music in worship and singing with a unified voice, a deliberate space for the Holy Spirit to work will be created to move the congregation toward spiritual renewal.

Ministry Journey

As a child, my mother intentionally brought my siblings and I to church and encouraged our spiritual foundation in the same way that Susanna Wesley did for her children. When I was young, going to worship was the way I connected with God. Singing hymns taught me how to sing and the words of the songs and helped shape my faith. At the age of nine, I sang in a choral group called the Wesleyan Singers, and by the time I was ten, I was involved in leading parts of worship. Music was a huge part of my life, and singing hymns every week in worship helped me learn how to harmonize and

become a soloist. Additionally, as an active member of the youth group, I took my studies and commitment seriously and even argued theology at the young age of eleven.

By the time I was seventeen, I had preached my first sermon. My mother and grandmother played a significant role in my involvement with the church, and their nurturing helped me become a leader. However, growing up in this environment also led to complacency about my faith as a teen. This changed when a weekend of prayer and revival led by Aldersgate Renewal Ministries came to my church. Within the space of a special worship of music, prayer, and renewal, the Holy Spirit pushed me out of my seat to pray for my brother. This would change my perspective of God and justification. I embraced my faith and awareness of justifying grace through Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and it informed how I would live my life as a believer.

Thirty-four years later, a similar experience of assurance washed over me as I presented a historical first-person message from Susanna Wesley, the mother of John and Charles Wesley, in that same worship space I encountered in my youth. This experience confirmed my call into ministry and again affirmed the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life as a believer.

In the years between these two moments, where I experienced a significant movement of the Holy Spirit, I intentionally sought out and gained skills that would prepare me for pastoral ministry, ones that would guide me in planning and leading worship. As a singer and actor, I earned an undergraduate degree in music theatre, which would help me develop my ability to stand in front of others and share stories. I was able to teach and direct young people through youth ministry work. As a theatre director. I

planned and orchestrated the performances, which gave me the experience of putting together moving parts of images, music, and storytelling to convey a message.

I developed my storytelling skills as I worked as a historical interpreter and actor in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. There, I knew that I had the gift of capturing the attention of others as I laid the pieces of intensity in a dramatic telling of a story. This would be further developed as I found myself telling the story of Susanna Wesley on Mother's Day, which would lead to God calling me to use the skills I had gained for His Kingdom.

My husband and I met performing in the same show in Virginia, but over the first ten years of our marriage, we had stopped singing as life became busy with work and children. When we moved back to my hometown and attended my home church, God called us both to sing from the choir loft where I first sang as a child. This call led to the development of a music program about the history of hymns, where we could utilize our talents to tell these stories and perform for others. I saw it as a place where my skills in theatre, music, and storytelling would come together in a perfect place of worship and ministry. It became an opportunity for the movement of the Holy Spirit to touch the audience and move us in a career direction that we did not expect. God moved in the lives of both my husband and me, calling us into full-time ministry.

I began my pastoral ministry and seminary study simultaneously and discovered that the talents and abilities I had developed in my previous profession, leading others in ministry and music and planning through conflict, were being honed for preparing and conducting worship services that would provide opportunities for the Holy Spirit to work within the community of faith.

While studying for my Master of Divinity degree at United Theological Seminary, my spiritual formation class was one of the most influential parts of my education. It guided me to view my calling to ministry and the experiences that shaped me the most in my journey. When we were asked to identify the one thing central to our call to ministry, I found that my call centered around the music integral to my spiritual foundation. This realization drew me to the opening line of the hymn "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" by Robert Robinson, "Tune my heart to sing Thy grace." I believed that my call was to tune my heart to God's grace so that I could help others sing the song of His grace.

The tuning of my heart connects back to my spiritual formation grounded in the music of the church. My earliest memories were formed by singing hymns in the pews of my home church in Blairsville, Pennsylvania. I was unaware during my earliest days that singing played an integral part in the connection to my faith. The whole worship experience and connection to singing and prayers became the practice that would serve as my connection to God throughout my life. My conversation through song would be the thread that would connect my personal experience of God and my experience of the Holy Spirit as a young person who needed assurance of God's grace, just as John and Charles needed that assurance as ordained clergy in the eighteenth century. That song of grace would lead me into ministry years later and bring me back to the same spot to be lifted in the Holy Spirit again. This song is significant to my call into pastoral ministry and my work as a pastor in my current ministry appointment.

Synergy

My doctoral work at United Theological Seminary centered on the spiritual act of singing and praying and how the focus on a unified practice of singing spiritual songs creates space for the Holy Spirit to move in and beyond worship. My involvement in worship and daily life has been connected to the church's hymnody. The Holy Spirit drew me to the music of worship from an early age and has led me to a call centered on singing the song of His grace. My education and experience will lay the foundation of this doctoral project.

Education

Through my education in musical theatre, I learned the craft of telling a story through song. My various roles in a wide range of shows as well as the backstage work of theatre and its production, have assisted me in the confidence to plan and implement any project from beginning to end. I have participated in, led, and directed theatrical presentations which led me to develop the skill of capturing a project's big picture and vision.

My training at United Theological Seminary as a Master of Divinity Student has set the foundations of theological, doctrinal, and scriptural analysis of God’s work and purpose as I structure the church's life in worship and spiritual formation. I also obtained a structured and intentional strategy for leading by God’s vision and shepherding the church's ministry. Breakthrough prayer was an effective and scripturally sound way to frame all essential work in the church and beyond to lay the foundation for spiritual breakthroughs. This work leads to connections with God through the Holy Spirit and

invites God to be at work leading, equipping, and interceding on our behalf to bring about transformation in the church, which is the living body of Christ in the world.

Experience

Due to my background as a performer, I have honed the ability to communicate a narrative through song in a variety of settings. My inherent capacity to convey emotion enables me to draw from personal and collective experiences, crafting a captivating and inspiring experience for the audience. As a soloist, I have performed in choir performances on stages, in places of worship, community centers, and camps. In addition, I have showcased my talents in theatrical productions both on a professional level and in community theater. I am confident and at ease in front of any audience and am eager to bring my talents to any venue.

I possess professional experience in leading worship music, mentoring young people in music and drama as a camp leader, and teaching music and theatre to youth of all ages. My spouse and I founded Zeitgeist Ministry, where we developed and executed the ministry of recounting the history of hymns and stories for various audiences through speech and song. Our journey led us to hear a calling to full-time ministry and transformation, as we found renewed inspiration in our love for church hymnody and presenting it in a way that is guided by the Holy Spirit. Through this ministry, we were able to receive and impart the message of new life and assurance to ourselves and others, as we were transformed by the Holy Spirit.

I develop and lead worship weekly as an ordained Elder in the Global Methodist Church at Derby Global Methodist Church. This is where my skills and the leading of the

Holy Spirit have led me to carry out the work of my doctoral project. The proposed outcome of the project would start a journey of healing, reconciliation, and renewal of the faith at Derby GMC.

Healing

Derby GMC has undergone a traumatic experience in its ministry of music and worship. The congregation has been divided due to strained relationships, and the effects of COVID-19 have further worsened the situation by depleting the music and a united spiritual song. The dysfunction, lack of trust in leadership, and animosity over the divisions have left a mark of trauma on the congregation. As a result, the primary focus of worship and music as a spiritual act of worship has been replaced by the wound experienced by the faith community.

Reconciliation

The faith community must come together and reconcile past brokenness and divisions to worship together in a shared space. The church has lost members who may never return, but more importantly, some members attend but do not engage with the discipleship ministries of the church due to the sin that caused the conflict. This sin has caused ongoing impacts on others within the faith community, resulting in a lack of trust, feelings of rejection, and abuse across all ministries.

Renewal

The faithful members at Derby Global Methodist Church are looking for more people in the pews, a church that looks like it did in the vibrant times when people were fully involved and engaged in the leadership. This vision from the past is a picture of all ages worshipping together and young families faithfully growing in the church's life so that the church continues beyond the current participants.

Develop the Synergy

The development and formation of my ministry skills have been shaped by the context of worship and my connection to the Holy Spirit through prayer and praise in corporate gatherings. My spiritual journey has been centered on the hymns that have provided the backdrop for my faith. The Holy Spirit awakened in me and called me into ministry through the music and prayer within worship. However, at Derby Global Methodist Church, music has been a source of conflict, division, and brokenness. The work of the Holy Spirit has been muted, as music has become a place of frustration, disagreement, and discord.

The primary focus in this project was to bring about a movement of the Holy Spirit back into the worship place. Encouraging the faith community to develop spiritual practices will help them connect to God through music in worship. It is essential to understand that the primary purpose of music in worship is to praise and connect with God, not to cater to individual preferences. Unfortunately, this intent is often lost in worship spaces and daily activities. Therefore, the need to readjust the approach to music in worship and daily practice to create a place for the Holy Spirit to engage with believers.

My experience and connection to music and exploring the history of hymnody is an asset to this project. I have researched the historic hymn writers of the past and have been called by God to retell the stories of faith and spiritual movement that have been used to bring about revival. My training in music and drama and my experience as a performer and storyteller allow me to decipher hymns and the stories behind them to create a story in worship. My passion for telling the gospel story as a pastor and my personal experience of God through music gives me the confidence and assurance of the Holy Spirit in leading this project.

They have not had a music ministry centered on the Holy Spirit's experience; the wounds of the conflict they experienced run deep. My training and understanding of emotional and spiritual healthiness in seminary provide a place where I can approach the conflict that divided the faith community and encourage conversation to develop a healthy spiritual practice. Prayer and music in daily spiritual practice as a focus beyond weekly worship will create space for healing and reconciliation as members on both sides of the conflict are strengthened in their faith.

The church has become complacent, the status quo has been accepted, and all the while, the church wants change. When I was called into full-time ministry and entered United Theological Seminary for the first time in 2015, I wrote about complacency, that this was the church's problem. I felt called to it then and am called to do this work now. Revival and Holy Spirit movement happens when people grow in grace and move toward the Lord in their spiritual practice and worship. This can be intentional in the work of prayer and music and the connection through the Holy Spirit that happens in these spiritual practices.

I connect to the Holy Spirit when I pray, sing, and preach in my context. This experience is something I want to share in this project to expand God's power in the church through this doctoral work. In my context, the church has been complacent about the music as it is in its current state. They want change and renewal, but they are also content not to change and heal their wounds; the focus of the musicality in worship needs to be redirected to God. This project will focus on the song that has been given to the people. The songs of praise to be sung back to God and this connection to the Holy Spirit will open up the floodgates of movement and renewal in the church and beyond.

In this doctoral project, I explored the need for connection to the Triune God through a daily foundation of prayer and singing of the psalms and spiritual songs to bring about the Holy Spirit movement and revival. My experience of the movement of the Holy Spirit, when I was a teen, emerged from a strong foundation of music and prayer within my daily worship. This strong formation was significant to my journey and is essential for believers of all ages who are part of the faith community.

The project focused on singing daily as a connection to God and developing a spiritual worship act. This spiritual development was put into practice to desire healing and restoration in the emotional well-being of the faith community. This work opened up a place for the Holy Spirit to equip and bring renewal and transformation to the individuals involved and the faith community. The desired result was a new focus to encourage revival and spiritual movement within the church and community.

Learnings

My purpose for this work was to stretch my leadership and skills to the limits and learn what God has in store for my ministry. My desire was for everyone in the congregation to leave their comfort zones to find forgiveness in God's grace and foster a place where the Holy Spirit can thrive.

I sought out through my research what lifts a person in the Spirit and how a person can be emotionally healed through the power of song and hymnody in spiritual practice. I found through studying the history of hymnody, there has been divine inspiration of God's word to His creation. Through exploring the experience of Charles Wesley as he followed and heard the Holy Spirit guide the church's music this was proven to be true. Through continued research I was able to further understand and share the music of the primitive church and gain an understanding of the theology of salvation through the experience of assurance that was found in the Wesleyan movement. In. the process of sharing the Methodist movement and its origins, the knowledge ignited and come alive in my context. Unity was discovered and the seeds of transformation began through the process of exploring and dreaming for the music ministry together.

Looking back to the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic and change and struggle of society has weighed heavy on the church. The church has suffered from lower attendance which resulted in less monetary giving. Concerns raised within the United Methodist Church which would bring questions of the future, that resulted in a split from the denomination. The church confronted many struggles and heartaches including cancer, brokenness, and a lack of connection to God through worship and singing.

Prior to the implementation of this work, in the fall of 2022 the church intentionally addressed these concerns. A Consecration Sunday was planned to approach the discipleship in stewardship. The result of this implemented program was pledges made by the church to increase giving and a stronger unity among the members. The church also met and asked difficult questions about their place in the current denomination and intentionally took the time to have arduous conversations and be open about their beliefs and views as a church. This led to their decision to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church, they moved forward in this process with prayer, asking the Lord to lead them as they voted through this process. The church navigated this process, unified and hopeful for the way ahead, and found themselves unanimously of one mind in the same direction. The intentional approach to both concerns resulted in a movement of God leading the context to a place where they experienced grace and understanding as they disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church and joined with another denomination, the Global Methodist Church.

At the time of the implementation of this doctoral work, the context of Derby GMC desired transformation within the community and new growth. Unity and guidance to find a new approach for music and its role in discipleship has been proven to bring more understanding and unity. Through this work I desired to find a place where God could transform the church and utilize my ministry gifts and skills they possess to bring about positive change. I believe this work with the equipping power of the Holy Spirit's movement encouraged a new focus and involvement of music in the corporate life of believers and continues to hold the key to transformation and hope for the future.

The next chapter will introduce the Biblical passage that speaks to the spiritual foundation of singing to God and each other and its importance to the corporate worship community. The passage also addresses intentional spiritual formation that allows space for God activity.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

> Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:15-20 NRSV[1]

Introduction

When publishing a hymn book in 1761, John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, wrote a rather well-known set of imperatives for singing the newly published hymns he organized for worship. The directions have been published throughout the Methodist movement bearing the denomination's name and Wesleyan heritage.

The directions begin with learning the words and tunes and introduce the idea of singing along in unity, bearing the cross to find blessing. The challenge comes from a place of passion within the Lord that thrusts us into singing lustily and tempers the energy with instruction to sing modestly when blending and lifting praises in the corporate community of believers. There is a reminder to stay with the timing of the song, not to jump ahead or fall behind, and not to fall into laziness in this part of worship.

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[1] *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Eph 5:15–20.

The final direction that is prefaced with "Above all" is to sing spiritually. John specifically voices this final directive as a plea for the purpose and intention of singing to be front and center as an act of spiritual worship.

> Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when He cometh in the clouds of heaven[2]

Singing within the church has been altered from spiritually focused to concerns over performance, style, and preference. The tendency to lift these preferences has overshadowed the primary purpose of singing to the Lord in the corporate setting. This has led to division, discord, and dysfunction within the church and faith community.

Ephesians 5:15-20 stands out as a directive to the church to adjust the Christian way of living to a place where singing bursts forth from the practice of being filled by the Holy Spirit. The practice of living in a way of wisdom, results in being infused and caught up in the act of song as the Holy Spirit dwells. The people of faith should be deliberate in their spiritual practice to invite the will of the Lord and the Holy Spirit to dwell within the church. This intentional behavior of putting wisdom into practice and being filled with worshipful practice as an intentional formula creates an opportunity for the movement of God through the Spirit which can bring healing and unity.

It is not coincidental that this instruction comes immediately after verse 5:14b: "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." This snippet from the earliest Christian hymn calls the newly formed church to wake up. Paul has just spoken

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[2] Diana Sanchez, *The Hymns of the United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989).

about living as children of the light (5:8) and has assured the church that now in the Lord they have become the light. The exposure of light makes everything visible, and this hymn reminds the believer of the new life in baptism. Some scholars counter that this hymn verse is misplaced. However, in the context of exhortation in this letter, which would have been presented in worship orally, is situated in an appropriate moment. These three lines of exclamation are meant to stir up the worshippers as they listen to cautionary instructions.

It is then that Paul exhorts in these verses a pattern of living that sequentially leads to a fullness that erupts in singing to each other and the Lord. The practice of intentional prayerful song can lead to a place where the Spirit can take hold and bring healing, peace, and unity to the faith community.

This Biblical exegesis will specifically examine the significance of prayerful music in the early church community that Paul addresses and how this intentional practice can heal the present dysfunction at Deby GMC and prevent future discord. I will argue that the practice of prayerful singing in the church community can lay a foundation to bring unity, with a focus on singing to the Lord, and will tune the church into the indwelling and movement of the Holy Spirit.

The intentional audience will be examined as the purpose of the letter is illuminated, one that addresses the early church and the present church. The intentional conduct, which is implored through exhortation, will be brought to the forefront as the required walk of the faithful follower of Christ. The intentional song will be detailed as it encourages singing to one another and to the Lord to bring unity and be filled with the Holy Spirit, encouraging a spiritual movement within the church.

The Intentional Audience

Date, Authorship, Structure

The purpose of this letter is connected to the intended audience and the occasion of its origination.[3] An assumption can be made that the intended audience of Ephesians is the people of Ephesus. It is attributed to be a letter from prison that was written between 60-62 while Paul was imprisoned in Rome. Those who contest authorship of the work set the dates of its writing between 70-95.[4]

There is consensus among scholars that "In Ephesus" was added later, this has led one to question whether the letter was written specifically to the church of Ephesus or was a circular letter that was meant to be passed to all the churches of Asia. It is most likely the case that it was not specifically written to the Ephesians because Paul spent three years in Ephesus and it is probable that he had strong friendships and connections in that region. Additionally, the letter is dated back a short time after he would have left or perhaps when he was still in the area.[5]

The letter is disputed because there are notable differences in its structure and wording from that of other Pauline writings, which leads to a question of authorship from Paul. One hypothesis implies that someone imitated Paul, which suggests the author was deceiving the intended audience while instructing them about morality and behavior.

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[3] Porter, *The Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 45-46.

[4] Michael D. Coogan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 113-114.

[5] Maxie D. Dunnam, *Communicator* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1991), 138-139.

Drawing from this observation, the letter is best attributed to Paul or a known colleague. Porter suggests that it could have been written by Luke because similar wordings were used in Acts, suggesting a third option for authorship amid the debate between the various Biblical historians and commentaries.[6]

The approach of the letter lacks a formal greeting and has a distant tone, not acknowledging specific people and situations, which further suggests the letter was meant to be circulated beyond Ephesus. As it reached near and far, it is possible that it was taken by Tychicus, along with the prison letters referred to in Colossians and Philemon, to Colossae. This explains the omission of the city, leaving a space to be filled in by the receiving church upon being read.

Ephesians has a close connection with the letter of Colossians. Both letters are said to be written by Paul in a Roman prison and both are equally disputed as the apostle's works. Of all the letters in the Pauline corpus, there are no two other works as closely linked.[7] They share words, phrases, and, most importantly, a theme. Verse 5:19 says "as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to the Lord" This message closely resembles the last part of Colossians 3:16, which claims, "And with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God."[8] MacDonald believes that the author of Ephesians reproduced many of the main ideas of Colossians from memory because the similarities are not word for word as one can see in the above passages. The

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[6] Porter, *The Apostle Paul*, 368-369.

[7] Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Sacra Pagina: Colossians and Ephesians* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 4-6.

[8] Eph 5:19, Col 3:16.

social context seems to be of interest in comparing these two letters. The same type of communities, with similar concerns, needed the same instructions.

As the context is considered in Ephesians alongside Colossians, the importance of Christ's authority is emphasized, His cosmic significance as the one who is above all is reinforced in the hymn of Colossians 1:15-20 and Ephesians 1:20-23. The audience is an established community of believers who are being reminded that Christ is the head of the church. Ephesians specifically speaks to the ethics of the faith community under God's authority.

This context moves from simply the people of Ephesus to a larger audience, being heard throughout the church in Asia and beyond. The lack of a specific problem or concern encourages the community to live fervently in the faith while holding on to a strong identity in Christ. This intentional message is repeated for emphasis and is carried to all the churches to guide them to become one, unified in purpose.

Outline - Ephesians 5:15-20

Ephesians 5:15-20 is situated in the second half of the letter. In 4:1-6:20, Paul builds an exhortation to the church of how to live out the gift of reconciliation and salvation through Christ, which is presented as liturgical worship in the first half (1:3-3:31).[9] The five verses in this pericope draw on a pattern of contrast between the desired conduct and the undesired behavior. Each of the practices build upon each other to bring the desired outcome of being filled with the Holy Spirit, which brings an outward

[9] Coogan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*, 1093.

expression of united song as well as prayerful worship to the Lord, resulting in ongoing praise and thankfulness.

Take care in how you live (15-18)
Wise, rather than unwise (15)
Make the most of time (16a)
Days are evil (16b)
Do not be foolish (17a)
Understand the will of God (17b)
Do not get drunk with wine (18a)
Debauchery (18b)
Be filled with the Holy Spirit (18c -20)
Singing in harmony with one another and to the Lord (19)
    Psalms (19a)
    Hymns (19b)
    Spiritual songs (19c)
Give thanks at all times (20)
    At all times (20a)
    For everything (20b)
    In the name of Jesus (20c)

The Intended Conduct

The call to walk intentionally is the main paraenesis from Paul in this pericope. The instruction begins in the first part of the verse (15a), instructing one to take care of how they live in the light (5:8) as they move forward. If the believer does not forsake the darkness of the old, then the outcome is a journey that is strewn with obstacles that will lead to falling into the folly of the past, one's time before one knew Christ.[10] The enlightened follower now knows of the places that are treacherous and lead to that darkness that is now illuminated. This informs a practice of carefully seeking the proper way to live. Moffat states the directive from Paul in this way, "Be strictly careful then

[10] Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 153.

about the life you lead" and he interprets "He bids them keep close watch on the principles by which they are regulating their lives."[11]

Continuing in knowledge along the walk as wise, not unwise (15b), is now the next step. The readers of this letter have been enlightened to be in Christ, clothed in the new self, and have been reminded of their inheritance, this knowledge brings a new understanding of life and righteousness (4:24). Paul speaks to believers who have already been awakened to this truth, so the expectation is that they are aware of how to choose to walk in wisdom from day to day as an intentional habit.[12]

The task of living in wisdom as a way of walking will involve a good use of time (16). This is not just the space of time from day to day with God measured in *chronos* known to the Greeks. But also, God provided opportunities (*kairos)* should be procured when provided. The verb that is used is *exagerozo,* which means literally "buying from."[13] It echoes *exegorasen* and *exegorase* that are translated "redeemed" and "redeem" in Galatians 3:13 and 4:5. The time has been redeemed in its fullness through the action of Christ who was sent (1:10).

On the other side of this message, Paul warns the church that days are evil. The responsibility of the Christian is to not misuse the time relaxing into their day-to-day pressures because time is short in the mission field, there is limited time to turn others from the dark to light. God's judgment is still present for those who live in the darkness, the wise walk leads others out of this persecution. Living in wisdom runs deeper than

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[11] Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 154.

[12] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984).

[13] Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 154.

personal salvation, it is present in sharing the light to awaken the sleepers, the ones to whom Christ is unknown.

Avoiding foolishness (17) is repeated with the term *aphrones,* which is not defined as a lack of wisdom, as in *asophoi* (15), but instead means an ignorant moral action. The pursuit of each day is to seize all the prospects with a working understanding of the Lord's will. Paul's call was to carry out this will as he shares his conversion (Acts 22:14) and this is a priority he is conveying in the Christian walk, that it continues for each of the believers who have already been saved. The daily task is to seek and understand the will of God so that it is carried out in the church.

The final instruction for faithful conduct begins with the repeated "do not" an intended choice to not be drunk with wine (18). A focus on foolishness and folly can be easily equated with drunkenness from overindulgence in wine or any other self-filling behavior that is put before being filled with God. The definition of drunkenness is "the point where the fullness of wine or any other alcohol has taken over in the person's body and causes foolishness and indeed folly." The wine has become the controlling factor in the mental and physical capacities of the individual. Paul chooses this essential imperative because it makes a striking counter against the opposing vision of an individual overflowing with the Holy Spirit. This is the desired state of a Christian and the faith community. The problem of drunkenness was common and Paul contrasts the behavior of the world with the lifestyle that is expected by Christians.[14] The Greek gentiles in Asia would have struggled with this practice due to their past forms of

[14] Benjamin L Merkle, *Ephesians* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016), 174.

worship. Worshipping other gods was often carried out specifically by becoming drunk to hear the voices of the deities they worshipped before their conversion to Christianity.[15]

Paul is clear to say that the consequence of this behavior is debauchery (18). Paul uses the word *asotia,* which means to be hopelessly sick and refers to a lifestyle in which one destroys oneself. [16] Vincent claims that it is a state of being beyond saving, which was used to refer to the direction of the prodigal son (Luke 15:13). This word also occurred in this verse about the lack of control in the indulgence of wine. It is translated for this time as the condition of a "tossing head," which leads to a lack of self-control and wasteful actions. A lack of control does not fit within the Christian life, as one seeks wisdom in Christ.

This wastefulness is not left there but put directly alongside a counter-choice as Paul exhorts the believers to be filled with the Spirit (18b). The apostle does not wish to steal the joys and pleasures of life, he wants to introduce a practice that replaces them and brings a better system to be lifted out of the low points and monotony that occur throughout life. This is the turning point of the passage, where a better way is repeated to the community as a reminder of who brings fullness above earthly pleasures, the Holy Spirit. Foulkes states, "It is no mere coincidence that in Acts 2 also the fullness of wine and the fullness of the Spirit are set side by side."[17]

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples appear to be drunk early in the morning as they receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but Peter assures the crowd that they are not drunk and goes on to preach the first sermon of the Christian church. Paul is making a

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[15] Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 75-76.

[16] Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 155.

[17] Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 155.

point that one can be drunk which things that lead to a life of waste or be drunk with the Spirit as they were on that first day of the birth of the church. The latter is the intent of the Christian.

In the early chapters of Acts, it is repeated that the same apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit.[18] The implication of this repetition suggests an ongoing practice to keep their hearts open for the Holy Spirit to fill.

The intentional conduct of living as wise, always mindful of time, and looking towards the will of God, leads to a solid foundation to create space for the movement of the Holy Spirit. The intentional practice of refraining from evil, foolish behavior, and overindulgence of wine or any other controlling power will lead to a continual outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bring unity and fellowship to the faith community.

The Intentional Song

The intentional song is the ongoing means and the result of living under the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul utilizes Roman, Greek, and Jewish musical traditions to encourage the congregation to praise God in unison. This suggests that communication is transmitted through singing as a call to fellowship untainted by performance and skill, but instead drawn from the work of the Spirit, which equips the faith community.[19] This communication can be transmitted through the three types of song that Paul lists in verse 19.

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[18] Acts 2:4; 4:31.

[19] Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 158.

Psalms

Psalmois refer to the Old Testament psalms sung with the harp or stringed instruments. The Psalms documented in the Old Testament are the well-known 150 writings from David and various other writers. Possessing a range of emotions including praise and lament, they are used in worship as "hymn psalms". Psalmody was interwoven in the formation of the Hebrew nation, poetry and song became the way in which scripture was transmitted to us.[20] Paul is referencing this familiar term, signaling the known Jewish psalms in the Old Testament. However, he could be suggesting songs that were like the psalms showing up in the New Testament in spirit and manner, like Luke 1:46-55: Mary's song,

> 46 And Mary said,
> "My soul magnifies the Lord,
> 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
> 48 for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.
> Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,
> 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
> and holy is his name;
> 50 indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him
> from generation to generation.
> 51 He has shown strength with his arm;
> he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
> 52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones
> and lifted up the lowly;
> 53 he has filled the hungry with good things
> and sent the rich away empty.
> 54 He has come to the aid of his child Israel,
> in remembrance of his mercy,
> 55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
> to Abraham and to his descendants forever."[21]

Also, in Luke 2:29-32, Simeon took Jesus, as an infant, in his arms in the temple.

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[20] Hogue, *Hymns that are Immortal,* xiii.

[21] Luke 1:46-55.

29 “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word,
30 for my eyes have seen your salvation,
31 which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
32 a light for revelation to the gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.”[22]

Both examples denote a speaking in Psalms at a moment that is drawing in the presence of God as it documents the faithful expression of both Mary and Simeon as they hold Jesus in two different ways. The Psalms were intentionally sung in the presence of the incarnated son of God to proclaim the mission of Jesus through praise. The proclamation fills the bearers of Jesus at the moment as the movement of God is en route to the world.

Hymns

Hymns or *hymnois* are characterized as praises composed by Christians. Hymnody derived from the psalmody of the Jewish nation. Matthew and Mark document that after initiating the Lord’s Supper, Jesus sings a hymn. The Jewish Hallel of Psalms 113 and 118 were probably the psalms sung by Jesus and the disciples as this was customary in the Passover service before they went out to the garden.[23] Martin explains them as planned-out songs with theology.[24] Martin also notes that “Hymnic praise has always conveyed the note of thanksgiving to God, which is par excellence the noblest use of the human voice.”

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[22] Luke 2:29-32.

[23] Wilson T. Hogue, *1907. Hymns That Are Immortal: With Some Account of Their Authorship, Origin, History and Influence* (version 2d ed.). 2d ed. (Chicago, IL: S.K.J. Chesbro, Agent), xiv.

[24] Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2012), 62–67.

Scholars also characterized certain hymns as didactic hymns that existed in scripture. This didactic hymnody was characterized as compositions that instruct an audience even as it praises the divine.[25] They were utilized in the current context using traditional language and expressions to paint a portrait of the ultimate reality. This is an intentional use of song to engage the community to instruct and live in the Spirit.

Augustine defined a hymn as "a song of praise to God," as he was viewing the Old Testament psalms and the Christian songs that were used to celebrate God's redeeming purpose through Christ. A significant hymn was connected to Augustine during his time called Te Deum Lademus, and dates to New Testament examples: Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15020, and John 1:1-18. These hymns are significant in announcing Christ's salvific mission and cosmic role in bringing heaven and earth together.[26] They have a common theme of reconciliation. The unity of singing of this reconciliation as a way of uniting worship concedes an intentional purpose within the faith community.

Spiritual Songs

The spiritual song has also been called simply an ode and suggests a range of Spirit-inspired pieces that can be interpreted as exhortations to lift the believer on the faithful journey of discipleship.[27] Songs of the spirit are open to be translated as songs that cause engagement with one another through feelings and expressions that differ from the traditional hymn or psalm mentioned above. These can be the spontaneous songs that

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[25] John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2001), 243–244.

[26] Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, 62–67.

[27] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1984)

come from the hopeful filling of the Holy Spirit to bring unity. These songs may refer to the gift of tongues but could be open to all spiritual gifts as Paul wrote that the fullness of the Spirit involved a variety of gifts.[28] However, we are not yet among one another in unity and fellowship as we make melody to the Lord.

Paul is exhorting that all the above ways of song are to be combined in the practice of singing and making melody to the Lord in our hearts (19b). Faulkes posits "it is doubtful we should press a distinction between hymns and spiritual songs."[29] Some scholars claim that different types of songs have no distinction in Paul's consideration in this passage. The argument can be made that all songs are spiritual when considering the practice of singing from the Roman, Greek, and Jewish worlds in worship. However, Paul distinguishes the distinct types of song as various ways to sing and be drawn as worshippers into the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The apostle is calling the believer to discern how to be led and controlled by the Spirit of God through daily practice with the desired result being a song that is sung in unity.

An opposing view is that Paul is implying spiritual song emerges because of the movement of the Spirit. The view from this thesis work is is that the intentional practice of singing hymns and psalms is the foundation to surrender to a Holy Spirit momentum that brings spontaneous song and healing through strengthened relationships with each other and the Lord. Witherington explains that Paul tells Christians who already have the Spirit to "be filled," using the verb in the present, continual tense. He further states,

> Paul might be referring to the sort of repeated fillings that happen to Christians who already have the full measure of the Spirit but are inspired in spiritually high

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[28] 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; 14:1-19, 26-40.

[29] Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 157.

> moments to speak and sing. In such cases it is a matter of the indwelling Spirit inspiring and lifting up the individual, not a matter of the individual getting more of the Spirit. This is not some second work of grace or of sanctification. A biblical example to support this hypothesis is found in Acts 16:25-26.[30]

One can look at Paul's personal experience in ministry singing hymns and praying in faith as further suggestions of his intention in this passage.

> [25] About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. [26]Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

This experience of Paul and Silas was a result of intentional singing and praying as a practice of faith which led to the Holy Spirit unlocking the chains that held them in the innermost cell with their feet secured in the stocks (Acts 16:24). Paul's personal experience would inform his purpose to exhort the church to sing to each other and to the Lord to bring movement of the Spirit within them.

The worshipful practice of singing to each other and the Lord is surrounded by a constant of giving of thanks (20) at the end of this wise practice. Paul repeats this here as he has already given thanks for the recipients in the opening prayer (1:16) and exemplifies this in his own life. Paul is thankful constantly even as he is in chains during the writing of this letter as well as others. Always giving thanks translates into a deep faith that is foundational in even the most trying situations. John Chrysostom gives this commentary:

> What then? Are we to give thanks for everything that befalls us? Yes; be it even disease, be it even penury. For if a certain wise man gave this advice in the Old Testament, and said, "Whatsoever is brought upon thee take cheerfully, and be patient when thou art changed to a low estate" (Ecclus. 2:4); much more ought

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[30] Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 310-313.

> this to be the case in the New. Yes, even though thou know not the word, give thanks. For this is thanksgiving. [31]

Paul advises thankfulness should be constant in nature and promotes a walk that brings the results of life in the Spirit. It conveys hope that is confident in all situations and sufferings. Every blessing comes to us through Christ, and it is only in His name we live and walk this journey. The intentional practice of song to each other and the Lord with thankfulness is necessary in the walk of believers as they worship together. This consistent song promotes unity and fellowship in the Spirit.

The Intentional Tuning

The tuning of an instrument is essential for the musician to perform at his or her best. This is also the case for the tuning of the Christian in a way to live with wisdom while singing the song of grace. Paul is challenging the church to wake up and be risen into life in Christ, to be led on the journey by the Holy Spirit. The heart is tuned by the Holy Spirit when the believer sings with God's leading and direction.

The purpose of preparation in Paul's exhortation will be revealed in the final paragraphs of the letter, where he advises followers to be strong in the Lord and to put on the whole armor of God. He encourages a strong foundation of living in God's power and strength for the battle against the spiritual forces of evil (6:10-12).

Some songs are chanted as troops go into battle, there are cries on the battlefield when all seems lost, and at last, there is the glorious song of victory when the battle has

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[31] John Chrysostom, "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. William John Copeland and Gross Alexander, vol. 13, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 138–139.

been won. The practice of intentional singing and being led to spontaneous Spirit-inspired songs prepares and comforts the body of believers for each part of the journey of faith.

Concluding Thoughts

The opening words in this chapter introduced John Wesley's thoughts on singing and its purpose in worship. John and his brother Charles would use hymns in their ministry as a way of proclaiming theology and the mystery of grace through Jesus Christ. The proclamation of the gospel came after the warming of both of their hearts to be tuned into that grace in 1738. This brought a Holy Spirit-driven movement that opened the floodgates and brought forth revival. The brothers were simply moving in His direction as they engaged in a practice of singing that was instilled in them at the earliest of age by their mother Susanna. The opening sentiment must be repeated considering Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 5, "to sing psalms hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts."

"Above all sing spiritually." In this simple statement, Wesley points back to the purpose of songs for the Christian community within worship and the daily walk. When the faith community is engaged in the ongoing filling and equipping of the Holy Spirit through intentional song the movement of God can enter into a situation and bring healing to current dysfunction. This builds a foundation that is continually saturated in the work of the Holy Spirit and an opportunity for healing, unifying, and mobilizing a spiritual movement.

In the next chapter the significance of the Wesley brothers and their intentional spiritual practice of singing to create community and faith provides a solid historical foundation for the doctoral project. The methodical practice of Charles as he intentionally practices his faith is essential providing evidence of singing as a way to walk in faith and make space for Holy Spirit movement. The chapter outlines Charle's upbringing and eventual conversion experience which comes about through spiritual singing and prayer.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Ephesians 5:14
'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead,
and Christ shall give thee light.'

Introduction

On Sunday, April 4, 1942, Charles Wesley preached "Awake, Thou That Sleepest" at St. Mary's, Oxford University. This sermon was the third of four sermons preached by the Wesley brothers at St. Mary's, forming the beginning of Wesley's *Sermons on Several Occasions*. "Awake, Thou That Sleepest" is the third in the Standard Sermons, a vital part of the formal doctrine of many Wesleyan and Methodist denominations.[1]

Charles and his older brother John were the co-founders of the Methodist movement, beginning in the eighteenth century, fueled by the Holy Spirit to bring awakening and revival to England and beyond. Charles is known as the chief hymn-writer of the pair, writing over 6500 hymns, many of these hymns we still sing today in Wesleyan/Methodist as well as non-Wesleyan churches.

> Charles Wesley stood in the shadow of his more famous (and more forward) brother John. John's overshadowing, which characterized to some degree their

[1] Kevin M. Watson, *Charles Wesley's Sermon "Awake, Thou That Sleepest": A Brief Summary, Kevin M. Watson,* May 5, 2020, April 5, 2023, https://kevinmwatson.com/2020/05/05/charles-wesleys-sermon-awake-thou-that-sleepest-a-brief-summary/.

> relationship in life, has been exaggerated by history's forgetfulness about Charles Wesley.[2]

Charles was the first of the brothers to be called a Methodist at Oxford, a fact that is sometimes forgotten in historical works. He was the first to experience conversion and fully understand the new birth that would become part of the means of grace of the Methodists, a stable part of the doctrine of Methodist tradition today.

This sermon, often attributed to John in error, was preached amid the fruits of the movement as it grew and caught fire. Charles preached it three years and a month shy of his personal conversion experience on May 21, 1738. Why does the St. Mary's crowd at Oxford need to hear about waking up to their faith? Have they not already discovered an awakening as believers in Jesus Christ sitting in worship? Charles Wesley chose to preach this message on a short hymn amid Paul's letter to the Ephesians, it proved necessary because, as ordained priests, they had been awakened to a new birth in Christ after being ordained and busy at God's work.

Ephesians 5:14 was a song that was most likely part of the Baptism ritual in the newly established Christian church. This was sung at the moment of commitment and baptism of the water and the Spirit. Charles focuses on this song for his appeal as a call to awaken from slumber as he establishes the need for new birth. Singing daily has been a practice instilled in Charles and played a central role in the moment of new birth that ignited the Wesley movement. The song planted in practice and prayer would be utilized in a moment of healing for Charles that would orchestrate the Wesleyan movement as a central element of renewal and awakening.

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[2] John R Tyson, "Introduction," *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (New York, NY, 2000; online edn, Oxford Academic, 31 (Oct. 2023), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195134858.003.0001.

In this chapter, the event of Charles's conversion will be established as the point where the intentional spiritual practice of singing becomes a foundation that contributed igniting the Methodist movement.

This chapter will examine the timeline of Charles's spiritual formation, the time before, the day of conversion, and the fruits after conversion, as each part is significant to where the intentional practices of song and prayer brought awakening and revival.

Spiritual Formation

- He was nurtured in intentional spiritual practice by his mother at Epworth.
- He implemented his practice method at Oxford.

The time before conversion:

- He continued the practice through struggle and disappointment in the Georgia Colony as a missionary.
- His return to London to seek purpose and call as his physical and mental health challenged his course.
- The year of exploring the concept of New Birth and the days leading up to conversion.

The day of conversion: where intentional practice begins and ends with the palpitations of his heart.

- Song: John and his friends sing to the Holy Ghost over Charles.
- Prayer: Charles turns to prayer.
- Scripture: Charles turns to God's Word.
- Charles finds peace and assurance.

After Conversion:

- The continued practice of singing brings fruit to the movement.
- The journals and letters of Charles will set the course through each of these moments as his testimony leads to the pinnacle moment where Methodism took flight.

Spiritual Formation

Epworth

The first seed planted in the spiritual foundation of Charles and the Wesley family came from their roots growing up at Epworth Rectory as children with a mother who was beyond her time. Susanna Wesley provided a spiritual formation unlike any other household at the time, leading to her even being called the "Mother of Methodism." Susanna's words on her intentional devotion to her family:

> I have lived such a retired life for so many years…. No one can, without renouncing the world in the most literal sense, observe my method; and there are few, if any, that would entirely devote above twenty years of the prime life in hopes to save the souls of their children.[3]

Charles was born two months premature in the rectory at Epworth in Lincolnshire on December 18, 1707.[4] His family claims that he did not open his eyes or make a sound, so he was swaddled in a wool blanket until the date he was originally due when he at last opened his eyes and cried. His early birth and fragile state set the course for a lifetime of Charles suffering from illness. Some believe that his mother was more emotionally available to him because of his place in the birth order in the Wesley household. However, the Wesley family would be shaken with chaos thirteen months after his birth,

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[3] Eliza Clarke, *Susanna Wesley* **(**Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2008), 29.

[4] Joanna Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith* (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 7.

on February 9, 1709, when fire destroyed the rectory. The children would be dispersed to live with other families while they rebuilt, but Charles most likely stayed with his mother. Susanna became even more methodical in her practice after this disbursement when the children returned to the newly built rectory. She implemented the singing of Psalms at the beginning and end of the school day and wrote a list of rules that was kept in the family Bible for reference. The singing of Psalms at the beginning and end of the day came from the practice of the Church of England.

Susanna introduced a method of intentional devotion, discipline, and education that began early on for each child. Susanna implemented the practice of prayer before a child could speak, when they could speak; they learned to recite the Lord's Prayer.[5] She taught school six days a week, six hours a day, and by age five, each child was to know their alphabet and begin to read promptly. Her husband Samuel was gone at various times due to work and served time in debtors' prison for a period, so she was left in charge of the spiritual well-being of her children.

Susanna's intentional faith formation would have been inherited from her father, Reverend Samuel Annesley, whose parents were devout Puritans. He stated that he never knew a time when he did not know the Lord and understand the way of salvation.[6] His upbringing was strict in devout faith formation that was passed to him. Charles's grandfather read twenty chapters of the Bible each day by the age of five and carried out this practice until he died. He was encouraged by a rigorous moral character instilled within him and carried this strong character through his time at Oxford University in

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[5] Susanna Wesley, *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings*, edited by Charles Wallace, (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1997), 371.

[6] Arnold A. Dallimore, *Susanna Wesley* (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 8.

1644 and into the pastorate. At his first appointment in Kent, he followed a minister who joined in with merriment and drinking on the Lord's Day, Annesley would have none of this behavior. He challenged his parish even as they threatened his life: "Use me as you will; I am resolved to continue with you till God has fitted you, by my ministry, to entertain a better man."[7] This strong sense of moral character was inherited by his daughter and used in her instruction and care for the souls of her children.

At the age of five, the Wesley children were required to learn their alphabet. When Charles hit this milestone, there was controversy at Epworth that would have been impressionable on him at this critical age. This controversy was birthed from Susanna's desire to care for the souls of her children while her husband was away in London. She intentionally filled the Sunday evenings with reading sermons, sourced from her father and the Moravians, and prayers in the rectory kitchen. The practice seemed innocent enough, yet it exploded in the spirit as the kitchen filled week after week with up to 200 participants. In a single year, word got out from the servants, friends, and neighbors who were moved by the practice and looking for a word from God.

This intentional practice to fill the time captured the attention of the curate, Inman, who served the pulpit for Rev. Wesley while he was away in London at convocation. He wrote to Samuel to complain about this activity, accusing Susanna of starting a conventicle. She responded after receiving word from her husband to stop the prayer meetings. She responds to his objections of it looking particular, and her sex, and lastly, that he is presently in a public station, and it looks terrible on his character.[8]

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[7] Dallimore, *Susanna Wesley*, 12.

[8] Charles I Wallace, *From a Mother's Pen*, 22-24.

> As to its looking particular, I grant it does; and so does almost everything that is serious, or that may any way advance the glory of God or the salvation of souls, if it be performed out of a pulpit, or in the way of common conversation; because in our corrupt age the utmost care and diligence have been used to banish all discourse of God or spiritual concerns out of society, as if religion were never to appear out of the closet, and we were to be ashamed of nothing so much as of professing ourselves to be Christians. [9]

Susanna's activity here would be observed by young Charles as well as his brother John. It would become an example of doing things out of the pulpit when the Methodist movement forced them out of it. They were not welcomed with their new message, even as they remained Priests in the Church of England, until their deaths.

> To your second, I reply that as I am a woman, so I am also mistress of a large family. And though the superior charge of the souls contained in it lies upon you as head of the family and as their minister, yet in your absence I cannot but look upon every soul you leave under my care as a talent committed to me under a trust by the great Lord of all the families of heaven and earth. And if I am unfaithful to him or to you in neglecting to improve these talents, how shall I answer unto him, when he shall command me to render an account of my stewardship? [10]

In this letter, Susanna also speaks about her intentional method of caring for each child by spending time over the week in one-to-one meetings to know them better, hear from them, and encourage their practice. Their father was missing this contact, so Susanna had to step into this spiritual role for both parents in Samuel's absence. Susanna stays in contact with her children through correspondence by letters throughout her life into their adulthood. She counsels their lives and ministries and has knowledge that a woman would not customarily have in the early eighteenth century. This would give Charles and John respect for women in ministry, as they became vital to the early Methodist movement as it spread throughout England. Susanna believed that women

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[9] Wesley, *The Complete Writings*, 79.

[10] Wesley, *The Complete Writings*, 79.

should learn to read before learning to sew, which was an unusual idea in her time. This practice in parenting would give John and Charles respect for women because their mother was their spiritual leader as they grew up.

> If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me that you desire me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience, but send me your positive command, in such full and express terms, as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting this opportunity of doing good, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ.[11]

Samuel does not end the Sunday night prayer meetings; he allows them to continue. This decision would affirm Susanna's practices and introduce a partnership between the Wesley brothers' parents that would be instrumental in their alliance as they worked together in the future. The brothers would have big differences about where the movement would progress as it moved to America, John ordained Coke and sent him to the colonies to ordain Asbury. Still, they could work together through their different personalities to bring revival.

At Oxford

At thirteen, Charles left Epworth to attend Westminster School and was a student there until 1726. His oldest brother, Samuel Jr., was a schoolmaster there and had an essential role in his younger brother's development during these adolescent years. Charles emphasized this, stating later in his life, "My eldest brother Samuel brought us up and was a father to the whole family." Charles was dependent on his older brothers in the

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[11] Wesley, *The Complete Writings*, 82-83.

absence of his father. He followed Samuel, John, and his father by attending Oxford University and studying at Christ Church College from 1727 to 1735.[12]

"My first year at college I lost in diversions: the next, I set myself to study."[13] Charles had strayed from the faithful leanings of his upbringing when he arrived at Oxford. Still, it was during his second year that he gravitated back to Susanna's structure and developed his own method in his faith and study.

> I went to the weekly sacrament and persuaded two or three young students to accompany me, and to observe the method of study prescribed by the statutes of the university. This gained me the harmless name of *Methodist.* In half a year my brother left his curacy at Epworth and came to our assistance.

Charles inauspiciously gathered a small group of like-minded fellow students to follow a structured method for faith and practice and developed a club of Methodists that would settle on the name of the "Holy Club." He invited his older brother John to return to Oxford to lead the group he had gathered. The Holy Club becomes the beginning seed of Methodism. Even though the group receives criticism for their fanatical ways of methodical practice of prayer, fasting, and taking the sacrament weekly, the University desires this kind of practice for the students who have become lax in their practices.

One of the members, William Morgan, encourages their club to visit Oxford Castle Prison where debtors were crammed in with debtors, to visit inmates and bring them spiritual encouragement.[14] The group felt a calling to this ministry and visited twice a week. This practice caused further ridicule for the group, who were mocked and called "saints" for studying and praying. At this time, John wrote to his father, Samuel, who

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[12] Joanna Cruickshank, *Pain, Passion and Faith* (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 3-5.

[13] Stuart Andrews, *Methodism and Society* (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, LLP, 2007).

[14] Andrews, *Methodism and Society*, 25.

approved of their work. John applied to the Bishop of Oxford for approval of the work, and the group was allowed to enter the prisons and bring this practice of prayer, singing, and meditating on God's word to the terrible conditions inside these institutions. This intentional care for others emerged from their method of spending time in spiritual practice.

Morgan also encouraged the club to make regular visits to people in their homes and to give to those in need, this becomes part of their weekly practices. The group prayed on the hour, fasted twice a week, and took the sacrament weekly. Over time they were called the "The Saints Club," "The Holy Company," and "The Bible Moths," but being called "Methodists" stuck as they moved forward. Their work drew negative attention, but the biggest opposition to the group came from the Canon of Christ Church. The canon went to the college authorities to combat the fanaticism of the group, but the only thing that came of it was a rumor that they planned to "blow up the Godly club."

The Holy Club, over the next couple of years, would ebb and flow over the summer breaks and changes in membership, yet Charles, John, and the rest of the group continued in this intentional practice that came naturally from the Wesley household and took over Oxford. There was a debate between Charles and John about this group and its origins. Even though it thrived from John's leadership, it did begin with Charles and his adherence to the practice he learned at Epworth.

Before Conversion

> I took my Master's Degree and only thought of spending all my days at Oxford. But my brother, who always had the ascendant over me, persuaded me to accompany him and Mr. Oglethorpe to Georgia. I exceedingly dreaded entering into holy orders: but he overruled me here also, and I was ordained Deacon by the

> Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Potter, and the next Sunday, Priest, by the Bishop of London, Dr. Gibson.[15]

John continues to have influence and sway over Charles as he follows him into ordination in the Church of England, then across the ocean to the Georgia Colony to be a missionary and a secretary to Oglethorpe. His journal begins with his first entry on the day they land in the colony.

In the Georgia Colony

> Tuesday, March 9, 1736. About three in the afternoon, I first set foot on St Simons Island, and immediately my spirit revived. No sooner did I enter upon my ministry than God gave me, like Saul, another heart.[16]

The intent of the missionary journey for the Methodist Wesley brothers was to be saved through their work and to live into the intentional morality that their mother taught them. Charles takes charge of Fredrica as he waits to minister to the Indians. In his dual roles as minister and secretary to Oglethorpe and the Indian Affairs, he found himself entangled in a controversy that arose from a woman upset about her husband being imprisoned, accused of mutiny, sedition, and for the miscarriage of a woman.

> March 25, 1736. After spending an hour at the camp in singing such psalms as suited the occasion, I went to bed in the hut, which was thoroughly wet with today's rain.[17]

Charles continues to sing, pray, and look to scripture as he suffers from the horrible conditions and endless accusations brought before him daily in Georgia. He is

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[15] Charles Wesley and John R Tyson, *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 59.

[16] S T Kimbrough, Jr. and Kenneth G.C. Newport, *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A., Volume 1* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press Kingwood Books, 2008), 1.

[17] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*),13-14.

exonerated from all that was brought against him by the end of April, but his ill health causes him to leave less than five months after his arrival in July.

> Fri., October 1st. I wrote to my brother concerning my return to Georgia, which I found myself inclined to refer wholly to God. [18]

At the beginning of October, while in Boston, MA, Charles is considering returning to Georgia to continue the work he believes God intends for him. However, by the end of the month, his health brings him to the decision to return to England, and on December 2, 1736, he arrives on the beaches of Dover.[19]

Back in London/New Birth

By December 5, Charles is meeting with the Trustees of the Colony to provide records and documentation that Oglethorpe gave to him. Charles spends the next two years battling serious illness as he gives reports from his work at the colony. He finds happiness amid bouts with sickness as he reconnects with friends and family in Christian fellowship at Oxford and Tiverton. Charles considers returning to Georgia while George Whitfield, who was a Holy Club member, offers to be a missionary for the cause.[20] Whitfield has reunited with the Holy Club at Oxford and made his way to London where he preached on New Birth.

> About this time [August 1737], through the importunity of friends, and aspersions of enemies, I was prevailed upon to print my sermon On the Nature and Necessity of our Regeneration or New Birth in Christ Jesus, which under God began the awakening at London, Bristol, Gloucester, and Gloucestershire.[21]

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[18] Wesley and Tyson, *Charles Wesley*, 79.

[19] Wesley and Tyson, *Charles Wesley*, 80.

[20] Wesley and Tyson, *Charles Wesley*, 92.

[21] Whitfield, *Journals,* 86.

The sermon brings talk throughout England about spiritual conversion and new birth in Christ. Charles is interested in this conversation and continues to debate about the matter for months. By February 1738, he met a Moravian named Peter Böhler who challenged him on his views of the need for conversion and justification.

> He asked me, "Do you hope to be saved?" "Yes." "For what reason do you hope it?" "Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God?" He shook his head, and said no more. I thought him very uncharitable, saying in my heart, "What, are not my endeavours a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavours? I have nothing else to trust to.[22]

Meanwhile, John has returned from Georgia, and the conversation leading up to Charles's conversion becomes heated between the brothers as they argue about the matter. On Tuesday, April 25, 1738, Charles journals this argument.

> Sang, fell into a dispute whether conversion was gradual or instantaneous. My brother was very positive for the latter, and very shocking—mentioned some later instances of gross sinners believing in a moment. I was much offended at his worse than unedifying discourse.[23]

It is important to note for this study of the intentional practice of singing that Charles's first action when documenting this debate with his brother is the word "sang." His practice continues to sing with intention as he meets with friends and family, and singing is done outside the church. Singing to the Lord was done in almost all his encounters, whether they were ministry-related or not. Singing was also engaged even when there were amidst disagreements, and it held importance for Charles, as shown through his documentation regarding it so regularly in his journal entries.

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[22] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 97.

[23] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 100.

Charles fell ill three days after this argument, but he continues to seek answers about conversion and new birth even though he does not know what God intends for him. Böhler comes to him, testifying for his need for conversion.

> He stood by my bedside and prayed over me that now I might see the divine intention in this and my late illness. I immediately thought it might be that I should again consider Böhler's doctrine of faith; examine myself whether I was in the faith; and if I was not, never cease seeking and longing after it till I attained it.[24]

In the weeks leading up to his conversion, he continues to seek after his faith and asks others to seek it for him.

> Monday, May 1. Mr. Piers called to see me. I exhorted him to labour after that faith which he thinks I have, and I know I have not.

Charles suffers through internal wrestling over what he thought he had as faith but seems to never have possessed. God provides another witness named Mr. Bray. Charles meets him on May 11 and says this about him and his endeavors.

> I was just going to remove to old Mr Hutton's when God sent Mr Bray to me, a poor ignorant mechanic, who knows nothing but Christ—yet by knowing him, knows and discerns all things.[25]

Bray was concerned at how long it was taking for Charles's conversion but participated in the process with him until the day he finally experienced assurance. Charles is waiting for the Lord to move in the days of seeking answers about his salvation. He leans on his intentional practice and encourages his brother to do the same.

> May 13, 1738, The afternoon I spent with my friends in mutual exhortation to wait patiently for the Lord in prayer and reading. At night my brother came, exceeding heavy. I forced him (as he had often forced me) to sing an hymn to

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[24] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 100.

[25] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 104.

> Christ, and almost thought he would come while we were singing, assured he would come quickly.[26]

On May 17, Charles finds victory over sin as he reads Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians.

> I marveled that we were so soon, and so entirely, removed from him that called us into the grace of Christ unto another gospel. Who would believe our Church had been founded on this important article of justification by faith alone! I am astonished I should ever think this a new doctrine, especially while our Articles and Homilies stand unrepealed, and the key of knowledge is not yet taken away.[27]

Charles intentionally looks to scripture and how God's word holds the truth for his discovery that was in plain sight, but he did not comprehend it until now. As Mr. Bray prays over him at his bedside, he can see the truth of justification by faith alone. This intentional seeking is leading to his new birth and conversion in the next four days.

Conversion

Charles woke up on Pentecost Sunday, May 21, 1738, and looked to the day expecting Jesus to meet him there. He has hope on this day, even as he suffers from extreme illness. Tyson calls this day for Charles his own personal Pentecost.[28] His journal entries describe the progression of intentional activity and practice to allow him to open a space for personal experience with the Holy Spirit.

> I woke in hope and expectation of Christ's coming. At nine my brother and some friends came and sang a hymn to the Holy Ghost. My comfort and hope were hereby increased. In about half an hour they went. [29]

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[26] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 105.

[27] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 104.

[28] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 108.

[29] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 108.

This is the place where conversion starts as singing and praying to the Holy Spirit begins the process of conversion for Charles. The practice of prayerful singing is expressed to bring comfort, healing, and God's presence to Charles amid serious sickness. After they leave, Charles turns to conversation with the Lord, which was constant for Charles as he engaged in this practice before he could even speak as a child.

> I engaged in prayer, the substance as follows: "O Jesus, thou hast said, 'I will come unto you;' thou hast said, 'I will send the Comforter unto you;' thou hast said, 'My Father and I will come unto you, and make our abode with you.' Thou art God who canst not lie. I wholly rely upon thy most true promise. Accomplish it in thy time and manner."[30]

After the Holy Spirit is invited to intervene on his behalf, Charles enters the practice of reading scripture. Charles has engaged in this practice with prisoners and people in need in Oxford and the Georgia colony. Now, he looks to the word of God in these moments to be awakened to his presence, power, and healing.

> I rose and looked into the scripture. The words that first presented were, "And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in thee." I then cast down my eye and met, "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even a thanksgiving unto our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall put their trust in the Lord."….[31]

This passage appropriately speaks of a new song at this moment of conversion and new birth. He puts his trust in the Lord to give him assurance that does not come from action because he cannot attain justification and peace through his actions.

> I now found myself at peace with God and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ. My disposition for the rest of the day was mistrust of my own great, but before unknown, weakness. I saw that by faith I stood—by the continual support of faith—which kept me from falling, though of myself I am ever sinking into sin. I

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[30] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 108.

[31] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 108.

> went to bed still sensible of my own weakness (I humbly hope to be more and more so), yet confident of Christ's protection.[32]

After Conversion

The new song that is put into Charles's heart changes him as he experiences awakening at his conversion. It follows him in the Methodist movement as his brother John underwent a personal conversion where his heart was "strangely warmed" at Aldersgate three days later.[33]

This new song is sung through the hymns written by Charles and published by John as they share the newfound experience of being changed, experiencing justification and new birth in Christ. The intentional song would pivot towards a ministry that looked different as they proclaimed this outside the church walls and went to people who were usually overlooked. The poetry that Charles wrote was set to music of the time and would be used in the sacraments to sing in the Spirit and bring conversion to others.

In the months after his conversion, Charles would find that the song he found during that process could bring others to the same justification and assurance. Many entries from his journey speak of singing, this one speaks of him bringing a Spirit-filled song of comfort and conversion to others.

> July 2, 1738, There was one Mrs. Harper there, who had this day in like manner received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, but feared to confess it. We sung the hymn to Christ. At the words, "Who for me, for me hath died," she burst out into tears and outcries, "I believe, I believe!" and sunk down. She continued, and increased in the assurance of faith; full of peace, and joy, and love.[34]

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[32] Paul Wesley Chilcote, ed., *John & Charles Wesley: Selections from Their Writings and Hymns—Annotated & Explained*, SkyLight Illuminations Series (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2011), 49.

[33] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 110

[34] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 111.

> August 18, 1738, We got upon the leads and sang; full of zeal, and life, and comfort.[35]

Charles jumped on the rooftops and sang as well. He suffered from illness and depression throughout his life, yet the famous hymn-writer would jump on the roof and sing in Spirit-filled song. The fruits that resulted from the conversion of Charles and his brother John brought awakening and revival that came from singing in the spirit that originated from the intentional practice of singing. Singing in the spirit brought healing physically and mentally to Charles and to others, he ministered now in a Spirit-filled new song.

Conclusion

Charles Wesley's conversion experience holds an important place in the history of Methodism. Charles was the first Methodist and the first Wesley in the family to embrace spiritual conversion and new birth, his spiritual practice playing a central role in these developments. The continued practice of singing, prayer, and looking to God's Word prepared Charles to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be awakened to walk in the light of Christ. He was an ordained priest in the Church of England, served in ministry and mission work, and wrote hymns, but he was lost without assurance from God that could not be earned. His conversion also brought him physical and mental healing.

The people called Methodists have forgotten the importance of spiritual practice and spiritual conversion. Longtime members hardly know of the brothers beyond the hymns they see in the hymnal on special occasions or a special covenant service at the beginning of the new year. Pastors are continually told by their parish that they hear too much about hearts being "strangely warmed" and stories of an assertive eighteenth-

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[35] Charles Wesley (Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*), 108.

century mother. However, the modern Methodist church needs the discipline that Susanna offered to her children. The discipline of singing psalms and prayers fills the believer with the habits that open one to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to know healing and assurance.

Charles wrote fifty specific hymns that were used to ask for intercession for the nation, healing, and breakthrough. They were used in weekly worship on Fridays as the Methodist movement spread throughout England. The people desired to have God move in their lives and wanted the discipline that they saw in Charles and John. Spiritual habits were shared as a place to speak with God through song and prayer with one another.

The spiritual practice of singing was used in the crucial moment of Charles's conversion when he was suffering, seeking, and looking to the Lord in expectation of movement. The song lifted him and gave him a new song. It was a moment of spiritual formation as a small group sang to Charles in his time of need. In this moment of corporate singing, they brought assurance and led to space for a spiritual movement that brought conversion.

The Christian church requires spiritual healing and awakening to bring spiritual conversion and revival. The church is called into the intentional practice of singing and prayer in the Spirit to bring this revival. The words of the songs shape the faith of the believer. In the net chapter, the story of Charles Wesley continues as the theological foundation is explored. His words and expression of faith in the hymnody he gives the methodist movement still echo today with a solid Christian foundation that provides stability and adherence to the historic and traditional stance Christendom. The expression of faith through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs is examined in relation to the

theological expression of the church and its foundational beliefs and proves essential to the task of singing in unity and spiritual formation.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Judy Collins, a famous recording artist of the 1960s, states that she does not remember when she did not know the John Newton hymn "Amazing Grace." Collins imagines she learned it from her grandmother, who sang it often and shared the hope it brought to many amid the nineteenth-century Civil War of the United States. She reflects that recording the song alongside her other folk music made sense because she had experienced hope in singing its message. As a forward to Steve Turner's book *Amazing Grace: The Story of America's Most Beloved Song*, Judy shares her experience singing the song at a group counseling session.

> One night, after a particular argumentative meeting of an encounter group I was part of, I was asked to sing a song that might bring us back together, a song we could all relate to. I chose "Amazing Grace." Instantly, all disquiet faded from the group. We stood together, singing. Everyone seemed to know at least part of the song. We were transformed to a place that was calm and serene, peaceful, and loving.[1]

Collins would record Amazing Grace on her next album, bringing this eighteenth-century hymn to the forefront of twentieth-century secular society. It resided on America's top fifteen billboard charts in 1970, only 197 years after it was written by John Newton, and was number one in the UK in 1971. Its verses brought healing, unity, and comfort for many in America and around the world after the tragedies of September 11,

[1] Steve Turner, *Amazing Grace: The Story of America's Most Beloved Song* (Hopewell, VA: Ecco Press, 2023), 7-9.

2001, when planes were hijacked and flown into the Twin Towers of the Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon, and crashed down in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. The song emerged and was comforting with its lyrics of grace that saved.

> Amazing Grace! (how sweet the sound)
> That saved a wretch like me!
> I once was lost but now am found.
> Was blind, but now I see.

Turner's book on the hymn came about from a conversation with Bono, the lead singer of the Irish band U2, when he remarked that some of the greatest works of art made by protestants in England were the hymns of people like Charles Wesley.[2] "Amazing Grace" was published in the latter part of the eighteenth century by John Newton in 1779. One year later, in 1780, John Wesley published his largest hymnbook of the Methodist movement at that time called *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*. The hymnbook was made up mostly of hymns from his brother Charles, who was named a "lyrical theologian" over two hundred years after the Holy Spirit brought about his conversion and new birth in May of 1738.

Half a century before Newton's "Amazing Grace", Charles wrote hymns that are well-known today, like his Christmas hymn "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," which quickly gained popularity and is sung throughout society yearly, much like "Amazing Grace." The known words are sung with unity among the churched and unchurched. This familiarity of Christian songs unites and heals communities within and outside the church over 250 years after they were published, which speaks to the theme of healing division and bringing unity within the community.

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[2] Turner, *Amazing Grace,* 7-9.

The hypothesis is that if congregational singing is taught as a method of intentional spiritual formation, then a new understanding of unity can bring spiritual growth to the community and create a place for Holy Spirit movement and momentum. This paper will examine lyrical theology and its contribution to spiritual formation in eighteenth-century Methodism. This will be demonstrated through the multi-facets of systematic theology engaged by Charles Wesley through his hymnody to revive, restore, retrieve, and renew the church.

Lyrical Theology

S.T. Kimbrough calls lyrical theology a "sung" theology or at the least a theology expressed in poetry and song. However, there is a more profound expression in poetry as it relies on emotion, sense, character, scene, event, and idea and has a context that exists in the world and lives in a social location.[3] Theology is found in the first stanza of the popular hymn "Amazing Grace" by Newton. "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." The saving grace of Jesus Christ is prevalent in John Newton's hymn as it is celebrated and sung as his life was changed by the assurance of new life in Christ when he embraces Him as his Lord and Savior.

The same theology can be found in the words of "In Christ Alone" written by contemporary writers Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend, as the words clearly express life and salvation through Christ alone as written by the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9). The Christology of the song is clear, it holds true in sung theology, as believers express their belief in God through song.

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[3] S T Kimbrough, *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley*, Expanded Edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013), 4.

Lyrical poetry engages the mind, body, and our senses. It is not just a written word because it possesses something more, as it is a symphony of sounds, rhythm, imagery, and metaphorical language. Sacred and Biblical poetry moves the conversation to the movement of the Holy Spirit as one examines the canon of how God communicates through the Psalms and other hymns throughout the Old and New Testaments. It brings lyrical theology to the forefront as essential, songs of faith are sung and transmitted from God to the people as an expression of their beliefs. The songs of anguish and death with tears of lament as well as the triumphant cries of celebration and victory over struggle and destruction follow this theme. The historical implications of this type of theology have been present throughout people of faith.

The biblical song was birthed from suffering as God's people encountered persecution, sinfulness, and oppression. They carried the songs with them through pilgrimage, where joy was proclaimed amidst rescue from slavery. The providence of the one God was celebrated when His presence never wavered as they wished to return to bondage and doubted His presence. The Psalms, attributed to David and others in the Old Testament, were part of worship and continuing conversation of joy, praise, and lament between Yahweh and the chosen people.

The Psalms became liturgy and were used in private devotion, more particularly, they were used for corporate worship. They were resources for the community to engage in a vocation of doxology and praise. The vocation then, in turn, allows the differences and dilemmas to be held in a tension of creativity and expression. The lyricism within the doxology and praise enables the community to be able to sing what they cannot talk

about.[4] It infuses the community with the message of God's glory and providence amid their story, outweighing the individual need for self-proclamation.

Lyrical Theology begins in the book of Psalms, where human emotions and their expression are fully engaged through joy, anxiety, conflict, despair, hope, alienation, bondage, and fulfillment. They influenced the people of Israel, so their worship of God is never forgotten through their deliverance and salvation. These songs connected the people from generation to generation as they recounted the people's sins and God's covenant faithfulness.[5] There were even times when they thought they had no songs to sing:

> On the willows there, we hung up our harps. For there, our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying. "Sing us one of the songs of Zion" Psalm 137:2-3

God's people were reminded to articulate the experiences of this journey of faith into songs that should be incorporated into worship and praise of the Lord.

The Psalms created an outlet for response to bare one's soul in joy and anguish and the many emotions that emerge from the journey of faith. The Psalms have a way within the subject of lyrical theology not to be bound to time or space and can be revisited to consider past, present, and future. St. Augustine reflects on this in his writings as he found that the Psalms were embedded in his memory, as he recalled the words and repetitions of these early lyrical songs, he interacted with his own faith experience. He believed that they were encountered by all believers in unity through this idea of the past, present, and future of the work of God.

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[4] Kimbrough, *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley*, 13.

[5] S T Kimbrough, "Lyrical Theology: *Theology in Hymns*," *Theology Today* 63, no. 1 (2006): 22-37, doi: 10.1177/004057360606300104.33.25.

The 18th Century Methodist Movement

Fast forward to the early eighteenth century, the psalms were informing the intentional practice of founders of the Methodist movement that would emerge in the 1730s. As children, John and Charles Wesley engaged in intentional practices of memorizing and reciting the psalms daily, as well as repeating morning and evening prayers taught to them by their mother Susanna. Continuing these practices while studying at Oxford, Charles created a Holy Club of men who continued in daily faithful spiritual work, with his older brother John joining and leading the group to serve and care for others as God led them.

However, their endeavors did not lead to the movement they founded until they encountered a group of missionaries on their journey to the American Colony of Georgia. Moravians were on the missionary ship, sent from a non-stop prayer movement that began in Herrnhut, Germany in 1725 that was fueled by the Holy Spirit.

The intersection between the Wesley brothers and the missionary group of Moravians was the place where the Holy Spirit began the stirring of their hearts. By taking the head knowledge of their faith and igniting it into a heart movement ignited by Holy Spirit conversion their intentional methods of practice were transformed into a spiritual movement.

John and Charles connected to the Moravians and their missionary movement and followed their devotion through this connection as they all returned to London. When Charles fell ill upon his return to England he stays with a Moravian friend John Bray in

London.[6] This was where on May 21, 1738, which is the celebration of Pentecost, Charles experienced he moving of the Holy Spirit, becoming the turning point of the brothers' ministry. John experiences conversion as well with a warming of his heart three days later at a gathering of the Moravians.

The movement that follows is the restoration of what was missing in the Church of England at this time. Paul Wesley Chilcote in his article called *"Perfect Love Restored: The Language of Renewal in the Hymns of Charles Wesley,"* said:

> To restore literally means to build up again, and this was the primary impetus behind the Wesleyan revival that arose in the Church of England during the eighteenth century. The Wesley brothers spearheaded a movement of spiritual renewal aimed at building up the church for the work of God's mission in the world.[7]

Chilcote defines restoration in light of the Wesleyan movement in this way: "Restoration implies something lost and something found. The terms renewal, retrieval, recovery, and revival all point in the same direction: to be new again, to find again, to get again, to live again."[8]

The Wesley brothers, through the work of the Holy Spirit, would create a space for restoration of the Christian church at this important time through their movement. When the Enlightenment was threatening the foundations of theology and doctrine of the church, they were ordained priests.

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[6] Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley*, 44.

[7] Paul W. Chilcote, "Perfect Love Restored: The Language of Renewal in the Hymns of Charles Wesley," *Holiness* 7 (2) (2022): 113–25. doi:10.2478/holiness-2021-0014.

[8] Chilcote, "Perfect Love Restored," 113.

Charles Wesley as Lyrical Theologian

In his book *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, David Hempton makes this statement about congregational singing in the eighteenth-century movement:

> Almost every Methodist gathering began and ended with a hymn...hymns were not only sung on public occasions, they were sung privately or memorized. Wherever one looks in Methodist archives, from the recorded experience of itinerant preachers to the diaries of the faithful, hymns are used for expression, consolation, anticipation, and interpretation. Methodists absorbed their faith through the words of their hymns and sacred verse.[9]

The importance of Charles as the hymn writer for the movement is dependent on the theology he writes in his lyrics. As S. T. Kimbrough names a theology that distinctively is first Wesleyan belonging to Charles as the first writer of this title, it was important that his methodology and intentional practices of prayer, singing the psalms, and knowledge of God's Word is paramount in his devotion, because his lyric would inform many who could not read and write of the basic tenets of the Christian faith.

Paul Wesley Chilcote observes:

> Charles's lyrical theology reflects the genius of a spirituality that united an Anglican purity of intent with the inward assurance of the Puritan heritage, all within the larger context of catholic Christianity and worked out in structures of accountable discipleship.
>
> His holistic vision of the Christian life linked warmhearted piety and servant ministry among the poor. The theology Charles articulated in verse reflects a thoroughly biblical, evangelical, and ecumenical vision of the Christian faith.[10]

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[9] Kimbrough, *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley*, 45-50.

[10] Paul Wesley Chilcote, *Singing the Faith: Soundings of Lyrical Theology in the Methodist Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Wesley's Foundry Books, 2020), 18.

Charles Wesley's Theologies of the Methodist Movement

The Grace of Jesus -Salvation (Soteriology)

Renewal was born from Charles's desire to share the Holy Spirit conversion with everyone he met. In the days immediately following his awakening in Christ, he wrote the words of his first hymn after his conversion on Tuesday, May 23, 1738. He was concerned at first to write it down. "At nine I began an hymn upon my conversion, but was persuaded to break off for fear and pride. Mr. Bray coming encouraged me to proceed in spite of Satan. I prayed Christ to stand by me and finished the hymn."[11] The hymn Charles writes is "Christ the Friend of Sinners."

Christ the Friend of Sinners.
1. Where shall my wond'ring soul begin?
How shall I all to heaven aspire?
A slave redeemed from death and sin,
A brand plucked from eternal fire,
How shall I equal triumphs raise
And sing my great Deliverer's praise!

The first verse reflects on the initial wonder at the assurance that he feels as he is changed. He is expressing his redemption from sin, and the assurance that it brings that promises grace and life. The soul who is saved is going to sing the praise of the God who delivers him.

4. No—though the ancient dragon rage
And call forth all his hosts to war,
Though earth's self-righteous sons engage;
Them, and their god alike I dare:
Jesus the sinner's friend proclaim,
Jesus, to sinners still the same.

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[11] S T Kimbrough, Jr. and Kenneth G.C. Newport, *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A., Volume 1* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press Kingwood Books, 2008), 109.

The fourth verse names the victor of the battle as Jesus, who is the friend of every sinner, and our Savior. It also points out that He never changes. His grace stays in place for the sinner as a never-ending rescue from the self-righteous God of the earth, which is sin.

7. Believe, and all your guilt's forgiven,
Only believe—and yours is heaven.

The seventh and final verse ends with the assurance *only believe,* guilt is forgiven, the gift of eternal life, and heaven is yours when you believe.

Another hymn entitled "Free Grace", was written close to his conversion as well, it is a hymn of justifying grace through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice. [12] In verse one, Charles wonders at the free grace that is given to him without works.

1.And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood!
Died he for me?—who caused his pain!
For me?—who him to death pursued.
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Verses four and five declare awakening in Charles as the Holy Spirit speaks to him through the scripture he reads in Romans. It also refers to his experience of prayer and hymns that his brother John and friends sang over him when they visited him at John Bray's home as he lay sick.

4. Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray;
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

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[12] Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: Strahan, 1739), 117–19.

5. Still the small inward voice I hear,
That whispers all my sins forgiv'n;
Still the atoning blood is near,
That quenched the wrath of hostile heav'n;
I feel the life his wounds impart;
I feel my Savior in my heart.

Charles completes the hymn with the confidence of this free grace; he even speaks of when he will boldly meet Jesus, who has died for him. His assurance is sound, and righteousness cannot be attained without Christ.

6. No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine;
Alive in him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown through Christ my own.

The Glory of the Triune God- The Trinity

There were scholars in the early part of the movement who did not view Charles as a contributing theologian, some still debate that Charles wrote the hymns from John's sermons and did not create substantial theological thought on his own. John and Charles never created a systematic theology for the ministry. Tom A. Langford described Charles as "a theologian in the same sense that anyone who thinks, sings, paints, or dances about God is Charles Wesley."[13]

However, Langford might have considered the controversy over the Trinity in the eighteenth century and changed his viewpoint. Charles would pull away from his brother and demonstrate his theological independence on the issue of the Trinity controversy in

[13] Thomas A. Langford, "Charles Wesley as Theologian," in *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*, ed. S T Kimbrough Jr. (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1992), 99.

the eighteenth century.[14] Charles's hymns on the trinity are one place where he was not overshadowed by his dominant brother John. Wilma J. Quantrille, in her introduction to a reprint of his works on the Trinity, claims Charles was inspired by William Jones's book *The Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity*, published in 1756.[15] Both Jones and Charles were defending the Trinity at a time when Arians and Socinians were challenging the orthodox view of the Trinity. Arianism held that the Son, though divine, was not a co-equal person of the Deity but was created by the Father, and thus a subordinate, not an eternal being.[16] This was an old controversy from the fourth century, but the Arians remained.

The Socinians taught that Human reason, rather than the Holy Spirit, should guide the interpretation of the Holy Scripture. If there were different interpretations of a passage of scripture, then reason, rather than clergy or church dogma, would determine which interpretation was correct. The Socinians denied the divinity of Christ, stating it was unreasonable. Further proclaiming that it was irrational that Jesus be fully human and fully divine. Clark believed that these beliefs had political implications beyond the challenge to basic Christianity.

> A consequence of a denial that Christ exercised divine authority was that He could not institute a priesthood descending by apostolic succession and exercising its mediatory powers by virtue of that divine right: the Anglican clergy were thus on par, in point of authority, With Dissenting clergy (or even with the private individual). If even the Church could not claim divine institution, the State was still more obviously secular. 'No bishop, no king' was once more a relevant

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[14] Laura A. Bartels, "Hymns of the Status Quo: Charles Wesley on the Trinity", Methodist History 41:2, January 2003), 26.

[15] Wilma J. Quantrille, "Introduction," in *Charles Wesley, Hymns on the Trinity,* ed. S T Kimbrough, Jr. (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1998), vii.

[16] J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 281.

challenge if mankind was free to amend or reject its ecclesiastical and political hierarchy in the name of reason, conscience, or utility.[17]

Responses to these concerns from orthodox voices were needed to address both the theological and political implications of the heretical arguments presented by these groups. William Jones was one of those voices, he upheld Orthodox Trinitarianism as well as works that defended the powers of the Anglican Church and the legitimacy of the Monarchy.[18] Understanding this gives historical insight to Charles and a different perspective to his *Hymns of the Trinity*.

What nation is so high
As we that Christ hath known,
And in Jehovah glorify
Th'eternal Three in One?

This hymn as well as others defends Trinitarian beliefs and the authority of the church in the eighteenth century. Langford might have named Charles only the hymn writer of the revival, yet he assists and defends the theology of the Trinity at an important time in history.

Charles defines the roles of the Godhead throughout the second half of this hymn. He sets the song to praise with the theology intact, stating each role of the Godhead and the clear definition of Three in One and One in Three. The movement communities would memorize the hymns, and as they sang these words, the theology would be absorbed and known.

Hymn to the Trinity

3. Holy Ghost, set to thy seal,
The life of Jesus breathe;

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[17] Clark, English Society 1688-1832, 281.

[18] Clark, *English Society 1688-1832,* 247-248.

The deep things of God reveal,
Apply my Saviour's death:
With the Father and the Son
Soon as one in thee I am,
All my nature shall make known
The glories of the Lamb.

4. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Thy Godhead we adore,
Join with the triumphant host
Who praise thee evermore;
Live, by heaven and earth adored,
Three in One, and One in Three,
Holy, holy, holy Lord,
All glory be to thee[19]

The Power of the Holy Spirit- Pneumatology

One theme pervades this vast body of lyrical theology more than any other; these hymns are grounded in love: everlasting love; the new, best name of love; love divine. The concluding line of his famous hymn "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" aptly describes the lyrical theology he and countless Methodists sang: "lost in wonder, love, and praise." [20]

1. Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down;
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;
All thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

2. Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast.
Let us all in thee inherit;
Let us find that second rest.

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[19] Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. 2 vols. (Bristol: Farley, 1749).121.

[20] Chilcote, *Singing the Faith,* 20.

Take away our power of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

3. Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return and never,
Nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray and praise thee without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.

4. Finish, then, thy new creation;
Pure and sinless let us be.
Let us see thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise![21]

The Holy Spirit pierces the heart of Charles and then John as they both experienced relief from the burden of sin that they carried with them as they worked daily to achieve grace. They rely on the Holy Spirit to continue to lead them to bring the message of salvation through Christ to every heart and to share what they have experienced in the assurance of grace.

The Community of Faith – Ecclesiology

On the anniversary of his conversion, Charles wrote a hymn that became well known and was placed by his brother John at the beginning of all the subsequent editions of hymn books that were published. The published version omits the first six verses and begins with a familiar phrase to many.

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[21] Wesley and Wesley, *Redemption Hymns* (1747), 11-12.

7. O for a thousand tongues to sing
My dear Redeemer's praise!
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace.

The church joins collectively with these lyrics in many Methodist traditions to this day, probably without noting the import of the words in the hymnals or on a video screen because of its familiarity. The verse calls to mind the collective voice of a faith community and many voices of prayer being sung worldwide at once.

8. My gracious Master, and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread thro' all the earth abroad
The honours of thy name.

In this part of the verse, Charles takes a moment to acknowledge God's authority and seek His help in spreading the gospel message throughout the world. After their conversion, Charles and John changed their approach to ministry in the first year and joined George Whitfield in spreading the word outside the confines of the brick-and-mortar church. This led to their journeys on horseback, traveling throughout the countryside of England, Ireland, and Wales, creating Methodist societies made up of class meetings and bands of believers. Charles wrote hymns while riding on horseback.

9 Jesus the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace!

10. He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.

The name of Jesus and His sacrifice can take away the fear of death and offer eternal life to all of humanity. This theology emphasizes the importance of believing in

Jesus's full humanity as well as divinity and points to freely given grace. It acknowledges that without Jesus's sacrifice, humans cannot overcome sin. Through Jesus's death on the cross, sin can be vanquished, all sinners can be made clean by His blood.

> 11. He speaks; and listening to his voice,
> New life the dead receive,
> The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
> The humble poor believe.

Charles heard the Holy Spirit speak to him, and he received new life and birth on his day of conversion. He was sick physically and broken spiritually from his time in the Georgia colony, but God sent him to the Moravians and their ministry to hear His call to accept free grace and a new life.

A New Heaven and a New Earth- Eschatology

Charles wrote about the communion of saints who have departed through death. He mentions a hymn that specifically talks about the act of joining in song. There is a promise of new creation that is to come, the new heaven and earth will unite those who are currently on earth with those who are in heaven.

> 1. Come, let us join our friends above
> That have obtained the prize,
> And on the eagle-wings of love To joy celestial rise.
> Let all the saints terrestrial sing
> With those to glory gone,
> For all the servants of our King
> In earth and heaven are one.

Another hymn from the scripture was published in 1762 and is based on a passage in Revelation about the City of God.

> Revelation 3:12: Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God,

> and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from God: and I will write upon him.

The heavenly new Jerusalem[22]

1. Saviour, on me the grace bestow
To trample on my mortal foe,
Conqueror of death with thee to rise,
And claim my station in the skies,
Fixed as the throne which ne'er can move,
A pillar in thy church above.

2. As beautiful, as useful there
May I that weight of glory bear,
With all who finally o'ercome,
Supporters of the heavenly dome,
Of perfect holiness possessed,
For ever in thy presence blessed.

Conclusion

Teresa Berger saw Charles Wesley as a scholar who created theological documents through his hymns, claiming that these works were critically important in developing Wesleyan theological heritage.[23] Charles wrote hymns that were more than just words set to contemporary music of his time. They formed the foundation of the gospel message and reflected the transformation and change that he and his brother John experienced through the Holy Spirit. Together, they shared this movement with others, spreading the message of the gospel and its life-changing power.

As the chief hymn-writer of the eighteenth century, Charles defends orthodoxy and stands against the age of reason, he creates the lyrical hymnody that upholds scriptural authority. He is led by the intentional work of grounding himself in scripture

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[22] Charles Wesley, *Scripture Hymns* (1762), 420-21.

[23] Teresa Berger, "The Theology of Charles Wesley's Hymns," 73.

and prayer daily and singing the hymns he wrote to lead the eighteenth-century movement in its sung theology. The foundation of this project is lyrical theology, which focuses on sung theology that can unite a faith community and transform the hearts of believers into a shared state of grace. The Holy Spirit is an integral part of the church, equipping and guiding it in the work to bring about reconciliation and restore creation. Understanding sung theology as a form of spiritual discipline and formation will help the faith community deepen their knowledge of singing in worship to encounter the triune God. This will create a space for a continued encounter with the Holy Spirit, renewing the church.

The next chapter explores the interdisciplinary foundation of ritual theory that is utilized in the work of bringing a new focus to intentional spiritual practice of singing. The research into this theory provides a basis for singing to contribute to community bonding and unity where shared energy develops. The results are interactive chains that are made and hold and have the ability to create a shared focus where the Holy Spirit ncan fill the corporate setting. The desired outcome happens when. This community is created as participants in a study learn of the power of shared community singing.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Liturgies and singing are integral parts of many religions. In Christian worship services, corporate singing plays a vital role, framing every part of the service - from the gathering of the faith community to the sendoff. The varied voices join in singing hymns, spiritual songs, and psalms, as directed by Apostle Paul in his letters to the early Christian churches in Ephesus and Colossia. The Gloria Patri is sung in unison as a response to the recitation of the Apostles Creed, while the Doxology is sung during the presentation of the offering. Preludes and postludes also bookend the liturgical structure, with congregational singing being offered throughout the service as a collective act of worship by the church body.

People engage in ritual practice during worship, which involves intentional activities performed in the church regularly to connect with God and other members of the congregation. These rituals include sitting, standing, and kneeling during different periods that have been associated with church activities since the inception of worship. Over time, these rituals may become routine and automatic for believers, as they repeatedly perform similar gestures and recite the same passages and songs of response while moving in and out of the worship space.

In religious worship, singing is a common ritual that takes place every week. The act of singing is performed by individuals, specific groups, and the entire congregation. It serves a significant function within the liturgical worship ritual as it is expected to result in active participation, both internally and externally. This participation aims to bring about a faith experience and transformation. Singing during worship is a social behavior that involves the interaction of the members of the faith community who intentionally worship God through expressed song. The act of singing in worship has been examined through the lenses of sociology and anthropology by studying ritual theory and practice.

In this chapter, we will delve into the interdisciplinary foundation of ritual theory and practice for this project. The research findings will define the concept of ritual, trace the evolution of the study of ritual theory from the past to the present, and examine interaction ritual theory. The project will utilize singing in a corporate setting to cultivate spiritual formation in the context by leveraging the four qualities of ceremonial ritual: discipline, cohesion, revitalization, and euphoric encounter. This approach aims to create a space for the Holy Spirit encounter.

Ritual Theory

Rituals are constructed from a combination of the ingredients that result in the desired outcomes of solidarity, symbolism, and individual emotional energy.[1] In sociology, ritual theory is premised on the idea that meaning is generated in and by

[1] Collins, *Interaction,* 47.

repeated social interaction.[2] The study of ritual towards the end of the nineteenth century brought the disciplines of anthropology and sociology to the forefront of historians of the time. The practice of religious cults and their rituals were discovered to be central to property, law, and politics from the historic Greek and Roman practices.[3]

Emile Durkhiem and Ceremonial Ritual

Emile Durkheim was committed to sociology as a discipline, investigating and developing a dialogue of ritual theory as the source of human social identity and addressing membership in culture and society. He found ritual in the community interpreted as a way of solidarity. His work challenged individualistic thought, as he wrote that human life, in a significant sense, is life together as it pervades traditional, modern, and even postmodern societies. [4]

Durkheim believed religion was authoritative and dynamic to social ideals, beliefs, and practices that shape a common perception of, and therefore life in, a society's moral universe.[5] Through his study of Australian Aborigines, he observed ritual and society in its most basic form. He concluded that if religion generated everything essential in society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion.

Durkheim distinguished between religion and magic, pointing out that while magic does not bind followers to one another and unite them as a single group living the

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[2] Jan E Stets and Jonathan H Turner, *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions* (Dordrecht: Springer), 200.

[3] Randall Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 3-4.

[4] Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc, 2008), viii.

[5] Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, viii.

same life, religion is never found without a church. He is signaling the bond that church members make with similar beliefs, standards of character, and practice. They are connected by their common conceptions of the sacred beliefs they hold, and he acknowledges that the cohesion of their practice of faith comes through the performance of ritual.

Regarding sacred music and religious rituals, Durkheim has a different perspective from those who perform and compose it. Durkheim agrees with philosopher William James in the view that while religious experience is an authentic force in one's life, he is unwilling to accept the believers' explanation of their own experience.[6] Instead, he acknowledges that the power exists only as a dynamic energy produced by themselves as they interact together. Durkheim does not denigrate those who believe in their convictions but believes that they do not understand this experience as it is, a power of collective effervescence: the perceptible energy of a group engaged in a ritual practice, which is often interpreted as sacred. [7]

Durkheim's theory offers profound insights into the social nature of religion as forces come together to support a cause. In this study, religion and corporate worship are examined. There is electricity that is found when a group comes together in solidarity. Critics point out that the force of a group that is gathered does not consider the various complexities that arise from an individual's experience of the sacred. Durkheim's theory does not address personal experiences outside of the social setting. An example would be Paul's conversion in the New Testament which runs counter to the social norms.

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[6] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York; Metntor Books, 1958).32.

[7] J. Samuel Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1996), 162.

Durkheim acknowledged individual experience but kept his study and theories to group behavior.[8] Durkheim's work focuses on the importance of ceremonial rituals in worship, particularly in the context of speech, action, and music.

First: Ceremonial rituals serve a disciplinary function by imparting principles of belief and behavior, teaching individuals how to act within the group and sing together. Sam L. Jacobsen has studied Judaism and has written about "The Music of the Jews," connecting sacred songs to ancient times and highlighting how the practice of music can instill important teachings in young minds.

Second: This type of ritual has a cohesive function that can bring people together, strengthen social bonds, and build the solidarity of the congregation. An example of this is the Hinnei Ma Tov song that is sung in Jewish synagogues. This song supports the function of being bonded in a prayer song. By singing it together, the congregation affirms their shared beliefs and values, creating a sense of religious brotherhood. Durkheim also understood this as an important aspect of religious unity.

Third: Durkheim found that the ceremonial ritual serves a revitalizing function, reminding the community of a shared heritage and history. The use of the *Misinai* tunes in Jewish tradition is an example. These traditional tunes were believed to be passed down the generations from Moses as it was believed to be transmitted to him on Mount Sinai. They have been handed down and used in high Holy days to unite Jews across the world and serve as a ritual expression of the past.

Fourth: Durkheim believed ceremonial rituals had a euphoric function that gave worshippers a pleasant feeling of social well-being. Sociologist Ronald L. Johnstone

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[8] Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 45-46.

believes that this function of ritual is significant for the group when it suffers from instability and gives light when it is dealing with disappointment. Singing has played a significant role in lifting a community amid adversity. Hope prevailed during war, oppression, and discrimination of Jews in World War II and African Americans during the Civil Rights movement.

The music of prayer singing during the German occupation of Lithuania is exemplified in a story of prayer groups forming in the ghettos and singing during Yum Kippur and Black Holiness churches taking place during the early 1900s in Brooklyn, NY.[9] Singing sacred songs in unity provided self-worth and community stability in the face of prejudices and persecution during these times The social well-being that Durkheim observed in community ritual was indelibly important to these communities.

It needs to be noted that social music, as a ceremonial ritual, reinforces social hierarchies, as noted by Catherine Bell in the late twentieth century.[10] Anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake observes and raises the concern that ritual music can control and encourage individual aggression in a community.[11]

Durkheim's work on ceremonial ritual can point to the benefits of ritual in sacred music, revitalizing the mission of singing sacred songs together to create an uplifting space of hope and solidarity.

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[9] Clarence Taylor, *The Black Churches of Brooklyn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 38.

[10] Catherine Bell, "Performance," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 208.

[11] Ellen Dissanayake, "Ritual and Ritualization: Musical Means of Conveying and Shaping Emotion in Humans and Animals," in *Music and Manipulation:On Social Uses and Social Control of Music*, eds. Steven Brown and Ulricj Volgsten (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2006), 31-56.

Erving Goffman and Social Interaction

In 1967, fifty years after Durkheim's death in the early twentieth century, Erving Goffman developed his perspective of ritual, focusing on everyday life. In contrast to Durkheim's view of how rituals create society, Goffman shows how society and its rituals create the self. He points to the interaction rituals taken for granted in daily exchanges. He reveals that these day-to-day encounters that are traditionally considered empty gestures or good manners reveal the true self, status, and social organization of the community to which one is connected.[12]

Goffman states most of the world's work is done through social interaction. The tension in this statement is that the field of sociology began as a resistance movement against individualism. Goffman's principal concern was social interaction, which consumes all human activity, according to Tom Burns, who wrote about Goffman's work. He desired to include radio, television, and even talking to oneself as a social connection. Burns also states that Goffman's preference was to observe what actions people made more than what they said. He observed people, glances, gestures, and nonverbal actions that were made in social interactions. He made these observations about attributes of the social order of society, not individual persons.[13]

Catherine Bell and a new framework of ritual

In the latter part of the twentieth century, Catherine Bell contributed to the field of ritual study with a new framework. This new construct defines ritual as a situational and

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[12] Stets and Turner, *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*, 205.

[13] Tom Burns, *Erving Goffman*. London: Routledge. https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=179771, 23-27.

strategic activity that can only be understood with other activities. Bell writes that ritual is always contingent, provisional, and defined by difference.[14] She states that, at this point, there is no universal ritual phenomenon that can be defined and recognized from other activities. In doing this, she comes in between the studies of earlier scholars that desire to develop universal or cross-cultural ritual constructs through their bias or specific worldview. Bell specifically notes that ritual is found across many periods and places and offers new insights into religion, culture, and personhood.

The study of ritual becomes complicated due to the many activities considered ritual and the differing perspectives on how to define ritual, which is also the foundation of the scholarship in its own right. Bell explains the confusion of defining ritual and introduces the term ritualization to explain the action of ritual in her book *Ritual Theory and Ritual Practice.*

> I propose a focus on 'ritualization' as a strategic *way* of acting and then turn to explore how and why this way of acting differentiates itself from other practices. When analyzed as ritualization, acting ritually emerges as a particular cultural strategy of differentiation linked to particular social effects and rooted in a distinctive interplay of a socialized body and the environment it structures. The confusions that accompany attempts to distinguish clearly between rite and non-rite—those perennial obstacles to neat definitions and classification—are revealed to be highly significant for understanding what ritualization does.[15]

Bell proposes to end the practice of isolating ritual from its cultural and environmental context. She suggests observing the complete picture of the ritual followed by different groups and understanding how their ritualization is a strategy for the social

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[14] Catherine Bell, *Ritual : Perspectives and Dimensions--Revised Edition* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1997), vii.

[15] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory Ritual Practice. (*New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 7-8.

body. Bell argues that cultural and social groups influence the significance of the ritual, making it important for their society and practice.

In her study on the dynamics of ritual power, Bell argues that ritual can be a powerful tool for control. Early studies of rationalists treated ritual as a magical activity. When functionalism approached ritual, it revealed the effect of power on shaping social organizations and individuals. However, the study of anthropology has revealed that ritual power can do more than just shape social structures. It can also redefine, articulate, and legitimize cultural realities.[16]

Ritual has great power that has diverse aspects within the study of sociology. Bell also points out that theorists have often projected their own depictions of social order and bias into their study of ritual, leading to a predictable conclusion of the proposed theory. Bell intends to present a new framework for the study of ritual that does not continuously result in the same circular pattern of conclusions. [17]

The social person is complex and has unique characteristics that cannot be simplified. They have a social presence and are not mere actors in rituals. Rituals are not a series of separate activities, but a way of acting. They are not mimicked actions but are shaped by ritualization, which sets them apart from regular activities. The scholar, Bell, illustrates the difference between eating a regular meal and participating in the Christian Eucharistic meal, Holy Communion. The latter provides spiritual nourishment, not physical nourishment. Bell also refers to other sociologists, including Pierre Bourdieu, to

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[16] C.M. Bell, "The Ritual Body and The Dynamics of Ritual Power," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4 no. 2 (1990): 299–313.

[17] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory Ritual Practice,* 30-31.

further explore how the body, ritual, and power are interconnected and reinforce her findings on ritual, power, and the social body.

Pierre Bourdieu and Habitus

To understand how Pierre Bourdieu's work applies to the ritual body and Bell's insights, one must first consider his theory of habitus. Bourdieu's theory focuses on the attitudes, values, and dispositions that shape individuals and influence their perception of the world. According to Bourdieu, an individual's habitus is formed by the social and cultural constructs that have shaped their life experiences.

Habitus can have a significant impact on one's life, as it can provide an advantage or disadvantage in the world based on the social context in which it exists. An individual may be at an advantage within their own community and cultural context but may be at a disadvantage when stepping outside of their comfort zone and encountering unfamiliar social constructs. One's economic background can also be a hindrance or an asset in certain situations. For example, an individual from a working-class background may possess a strong work ethic, while a wealthy individual may have a sense of entitlement and a greater social status. Thus, habitus plays an important role in an individual's sense of identity and their ability to navigate different social contexts.

Habitus plays a part in the construction of rituals because different individuals enter social constructs and can morph into the community or not seem to fit in. However, the social construct of religious settings should accommodate all types of individuals from different habitus. However, in reality, religious organizations can operate based on a certain habitus, and others can be left out.

Bourdieu believes habitus to be largely unconscious.[18] This can lead to issues of inequality and conflict within social organizations and communities, without anyone being aware that it is a problem. It can also cause problems in ritual, as different people may perceive and experience it in different ways. Bell's earlier work on changing the framework of ritual theory and practice can be helpful here, as an understanding of habitus can allow for intentional approaches to ritual that accommodate and welcome different perspectives, approaches, and experiences. This can positively challenge and enhance rituals within a corporate body.

Ritualization addresses a situation by entering the moment and redefining the historical place. Ritual work aims to dispense with the means and ends of the ritual body while simultaneously changing it. This makes it a powerful place where internalization and objectification remain unconscious.[19]

Through Bell's study of the power of ritual, she finds that all theories, including Bourdieu's, believe that ritual practice always possesses a dichotomy of underlying contradictions to the rite. The ritual never names the contradictions, yet it provides the means for the body to embody and dominate them. For Bourdieu, it is the superior mastery of cultural knowledge and instincts over theory.

Bell concludes in her work about ritual and power that "the distinctiveness of ritualization as a form of social practice lies in its particular strategy of power. Similarly,

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[18] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 163-166.

[19] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* 116.

the distinctiveness of the power of ritualization lies in its particular strategy as a form of social practice." [20]

Randall Collins and Interaction Ritual Theory

Through his work in ritual theory, Randall Collins has discovered that religious rituals are, by definition, shared by a community. More than any other ritual, religious rituals create group cohesion.[21] Collins has developed a theory of interaction ritual chains that draws from the work of Emile Durkheim and Erving Goffman.

Entrainment

Entrainment is defined as the adjustment or moderation of one behavior either to synchronize or to be in rhythm with another behavior.[22] Collins describes the emotional energy that leads to entrainment in his work on Interaction Ritual.

> As the persons become more tightly focused on their common activity, more aware of what each other is doing and feeling, and more aware of each other's awareness, they experience their shared emotion more intensely, as it comes to dominate their awareness. Members of a cheering crowd become more enthusiastic, just as participants at a religious service become more respectful and solemn, or at a funeral become more sorrowful, than before they began. It is the same on the small-scale level of a conversation; as the interaction becomes more engrossing, participants get caught up in the rhythm and mood of the talk. We shall examine the micro-empirical evidence on this later. The key process is participants' mutual entrainment of emotion and attention, producing a shared emotional/cognitive experience. What Durkheim called collective consciousness is this micro-situational production of moments of intersubjectivity.[23]

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[20] Bell, "The Ritual Body and The Dynamics of Ritual Power," 299–313.

[21] Ithamar Gruenwald, *Rituals and Ritual Theory in Ancient Israel*, Brill Reference Library of Judaism, V. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 24.

[22] Collins, *Interaction,* 23.

[23] Collins, *Interaction,* 50.

Interaction Ritual

At the center of the Interaction Ritual is the process in which participants develop a mutual focus of attention and become entrained in each other's bodily micro-rhythms and emotions.[24]

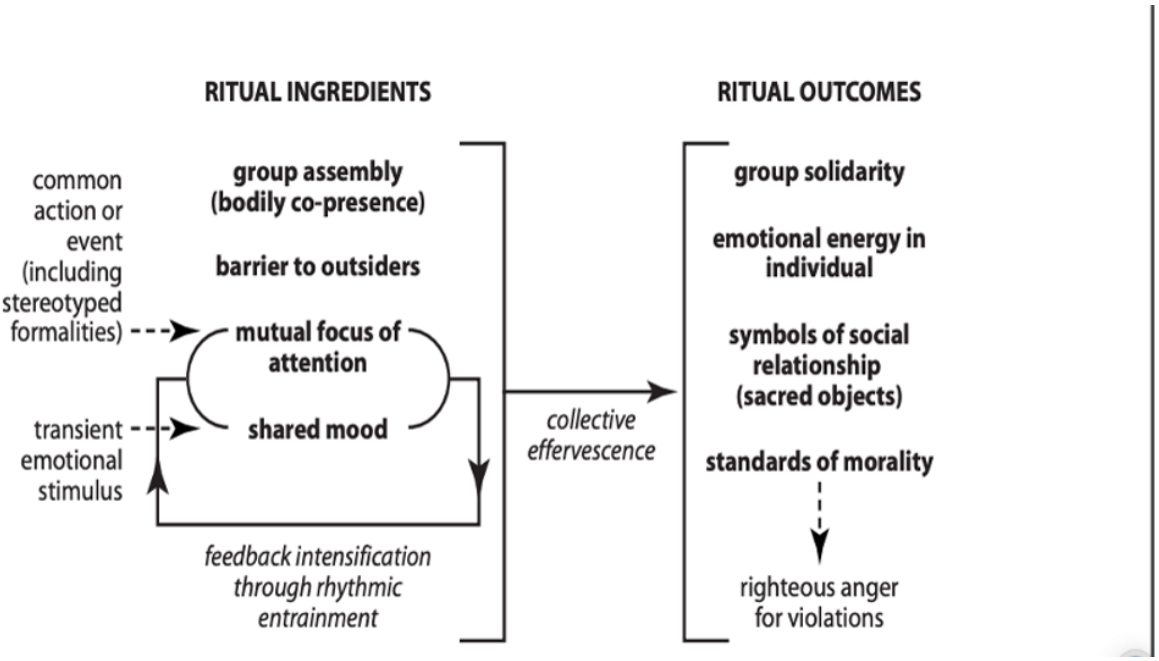

Figure 1. Interaction Ritual.[25]

Ritual Ingredients

1. *Group Assembly*: Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not.

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[24] Randall Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 48.

[25] Collins, *Interaction,* 48.

2. *Barrier to Outsiders*: There are boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a sense of who is taking part and who is excluded.

3. *Mutual Focus:* People focus their attention upon a common object or activity, and by communicating this focus to each other become mutually aware of each other's focus of attention.

4. *Shared Mood:* They share a common mood or emotional experience.[26]

Key Processes

The participants' mutual entrainments of emotion and attention produce a shared emotional and cognitive experience.

Four Main Outcomes

1. *Group solidarity:* There is a feeling of membership.
2. *Emotional energy:* The individual has confidence, elation, strength, and enthusiasm. There is also an initiative to take action.
3. *Symbols that represent the group:* These are emblems or representations that the members associate with themselves as a collective group. The members of the group defend these symbols and they have strong emotions of the group solidarity. Durkheim called these items 'sacred objects'.
4. *Feelings of morality:* There is a sense of rightness among the group, and the community defends this.

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[26] Collins, *Interaction*, 48.

Implementing the Interdisciplinary Study of Ritual

The project's theme is to establish unity in the congregation through the ritual of singing together in worship. The desired outcome is to begin to shift the focus of the ritual of singing together as a way of unified congregational spiritual formation within the liturgical ritual. An identified problem within the context is the failed ritual activity that has occurred because of the division of style and preference, which split the focus of the interaction of the members. The context fractured the focus of the community by dividing it into two separate worships with different music styles, which diverted the purpose of liturgical singing and unity. This change brought conflict, division, and confusion over the purpose of liturgical music.

Another concern is the focus on the performance of the ritual became central, and participation from the whole community became lost. There is competition between the two worship styles as they sing together in the present worship setting. The hypothesis is that if group members engage in six weeks of meeting, learning, and singing the music from different bonded communities with a formational view of music, the participants can approach and value a new attitude and focus.

Mutual Focus

In a successful ritual, there are shared emotions and a mutual focus. If a shift in focus to the purpose of the ritual of singing in worship is renewed and revisited as a

community, then the community shares the focus even when music is new and different to the customs or cultures of members of the group.[27]

Failed ritual can occur if participants become complacent over a ritual that is perceived as merely ceremonial or feels empty and falls flat in the execution. Singing a traditional verse or chorus can seem mundane to some who are adherent to contemporary music, and those who favor traditional hymns with a formal approach are challenged by new songs that they need to familiarize themselves with or the continual repetition of a chorus in a praise song. These realities can be addressed by shifting the focus of the time singing on the desired result of building community with this awareness of the need to create enthusiasm, plan the implementation of new rituals, and renew the well-known older rituals within the worship space.

The project will be approached through specific questions to inform the participants about what individual rituals different members bring to the group every week to worship. Pointing to Bourdieu's work on habitus, the community members should be introduced to the different styles of music and how different members engage with spiritual music in their personal rituals so there is a mutual appreciation of one another's style, preferences, and ways of connecting to God through music. This will open the minds of those who are fixated on their own style, and the desire is attitude will change towards different members of the group, hoping there can be unity in the focus of worship and the purpose of that worship.

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[27] Rossner, M., & Meher, M, Emotions in ritual theories, In J. E. Stets & J. H. Turner (Eds.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions,* Vol 2, (2014), 208.

Foundation Papers and Interaction Ritual

The foundation of the project is supported by ritual theory because of the social involvement that connects the community. Even when the participants are silent amid singing and music, they are connected through the effect of the ritual of music in their experience of daily life and faith. When the ritual of music is engaged in worship, it is expected, and yet God's involvement is not predicted in the outcome. The renewal of focus and plan for spiritual formation in congregational singing through the study of ritual can illuminate a new perspective for an outcome of unity and spiritual growth.

Biblical Foundations - Disciplinary

In Ephesians, chapter 5:15-20, the apostle provides guidance on how to live a life of discipleship while being filled with the Holy Spirit. By intentionally focusing on spiritual growth, individuals and communities can develop wisdom and resist the daily distractions of life, as well as the cultural and environmental influences that can affect one's spiritual journey. These factors interact within a community to create a culture of faith that is intentionally focused on spiritual growth.

Rituals are meant to be interactive, uniting individuals and bringing them closer to the Lord and each other. By sharing emotions and focusing their attention on the principles of their faith, individuals can live a fulfilling life dedicated to following these precepts.

Coenie Calitz contributes to her thesis, *Liturgical Singing as Symbol*, that liturgical singing "is more than text and melody. It is part of the repertoire and symbols

and rituals within a congregation, repressing and representing another reality. It facilitates an encounter with God and fellow believers" [28]

Historical Foundations - Cohesive

The eighteenth century Methodist movement became energized as class and band meetings met throughout England and shared in the rituals of singing the hymns Charles Wesley wrote, asking the same questions of the members of faith and adhering to the group's rules. This adherence to rituals informed the development of the community and brought unity. The participants felt that they belonged to the community through the ritual activity of singing, praying, and meeting together, as well as participating in the sacrament of communion.

Tesia Mallory insists in her work "Singing itself is a focused ritual action that creates solidarity. Singing during the ritualized sacrament of the Lord's Supper most likely creates a stronger sense of solidarity." Her thesis centers around the Lord's Supper and the Wesleyan movement.[29]

> The act of routinized collective singing served to pass down the theology of the Wesleyan community. John Wesley required that adherents to the Methodist movement take communion at least once a week, and if possible, as often as they could. Perhaps the ritualization of the sacrament combined with the synchronicity of the songs helped to propel the Methodist movement forward in membership. Additionally, the Church of England frowned upon hymn singing in Wesley's time because it provoked enthusiasm. The Church intentionally worked to suppress emotional outbursts by prohibiting communal hymn singing. [30]

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[28] Coenie Calitz, *Liturgical Singing as Ritual Symbol* 32, no. 1 (2011), doi:10.4102/ve.v32i1.430.

[29] Tesia L. Mallory 2021, *"Developing a Curriculum to Teach Wesleyan Eucharistic Theology to Students, Pastors, and Church Leaders at United Theological Seminary,"* Dissertation, United Theological Seminary, 46-47.

[30] Mallory, *"Developing a Curriculum,"* 47.

The act of singing together with a strong emotional bond and synchronization played a crucial role in the development of the Methodist church. This emotional ritual is still relevant today and should be revived and respected to foster transformation and spiritual growth.

The project aims to renew the connection to Wesleyan heritage and the Holy Spirit movement through the ritual and emotional entrainment that characterized the Wesleyan movement.

Theological Foundation- Revitalizing

When the lyrics of a song in worship reflect the theology of the church, the message becomes more meaningful through the emotional connection that occurs when singing as a community ritual. This emotional bond can strengthen the connection to one's beliefs and how they are transmitted to others.

When a group of people come together to express their faith through singing, it creates a sense of unity and solidarity. This is especially true when the focus is on praising God and affirming mutual beliefs. The outcome of this shared experience is often reflected in various symbols of the group's relationship with each other and with Christ. In the Christian church, these symbols are represented by the acts of Communion and Baptism. For instance, specific hymns have been written by Charles Wesley for the act of Communion that emphasize the theology of justification through Jesus's sacrifice. When these songs are sung together with a shared mood, it results in a sense of connection and bonding among the group, reflecting their relationship with Christ and with each other.

The Interaction Ritual chains connect the moving parts of worship that bond participants to God and each other as a community. An example of this comes from Calitz's study of *Liturgical Singing as Ritual*, where she specifically examines the song based on the Lord's prayer titled "Our Father," the singing of Jesus' prayer given to His disciples, which carries the theological message of the church. It is a prayer that is sung within the church and can be prayed as an interactive ritual through song. She shares this reflection of how liturgical ritual informs this prayerful singing of the theology embedded in the lyrics of this song, which is scripture accompanied by a prayerful melody.

> "This song is not only representative in that it reminds us about God for who He is, praying for His kingdom, daily bread, forgiveness, and so forth, It does not only remind us of prayer; it is prayer." The author continues in reflection that singing this song recalls trails and challenges through the spiritual life and reminds the participants as they sing of those times that the Lord has provided and guided the faithful believer through faith. This insight informs the individual sense of bringing those instances to the community and the collective gathering of individuals as they sing in unison of the Lord's providence within the gathered community.[31]

Ritual theory plays a significant role in the hypothesis of this project as it addresses division over music and styles of singing, the loss of members due to illness and death, the challenges of daily life, and the shared communal life of a faithful body. The act of gathering and singing the proclamation of justification, salvation, and the promise of Christ's return in the lyrics set to music will strengthen the community. This strengthening can lead to a stronger spiritual formation in the community. The songs sung together proclaim God's covenant through Christ's life and death.

The study of symbols within liturgical singing as a ritual can either bring unity or create a failed ritual. Sometimes, the songs that are sung in a community each year can be

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[31] Calitz. *Liturgical Singing as Ritual Symbol*, 6.

disconnected because they are only sung on a specific high church day. This can cause a lack of connection between all the members, the ritual needs to be revisited as a means of connecting the community and message. However, the opposite perspective can also be true. There may be a song that is remembered and only sung during one month of the year, which brings cohesion and memory of the community's resilience and connected determination as servants of the Kingdom. This insight brings new meaning to the ritual study and, when utilized, can bring change and renewal to the context when shared as a new perspective of change that can be embraced with new knowledge and understanding.

Conclusion

Through the ritual of singing, singers are carried out of themselves.[32] This is the goal of the gathered worshippers as they sing with one focus of praising God and singing together in the Spirit full of the emotional energy that comes from faith embodied in the community. This connection should bring spiritual growth not only to the individuals but to the gathered community each time they meet and, in turn, can renew and revitalize the church for spiritual awakening and God’s purpose.

Corporate Spiritual Formation- Euphoric Unity Through Social Interaction.

This project has the goal of uniting people in a community environment. By fostering a positive atmosphere with a shared focus, the desired outcome is to create a sense of solidarity and emotional energy, in line with Collins' interaction ritual theory with an emphasis or Durkheim’s ceremonial ritual observations. By allowing space for

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[32] Calitz, *Liturgical Singing as Ritual Symbol*. 8.

the movement and momentum of the Holy Spirit, the community can develop a deeper understanding of social interaction and how it can strengthen the purpose of sharing Christ with others.

Incorporating the elements of ceremonial rituals while being aware of the impact of singing together as a unified corporate entity can facilitate corporate spiritual formation. It can foster unity and spiritual growth and provide a platform for transformational experiences and Holy Spirit encounters.

The final chapter explains the doctoral project that was implemented at the context of Derby GMC with all of the foundational elements taught for a six-week period. This provided a workshop experience that brought unity and a new focus in corporate singing.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

Corporate singing is engaged in Christian communities throughout the world weekly in worship. Singing praises of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs together has the power to unite believers with each other and with God. The practice of singing together can be an intentional tool to bring spiritual growth and unity while inviting the movement of the Holy Spirit to infuse and dwell in the community of believers. The Methodist movement relied on singing as a foundational aspect of learning doctrine and theology, sharing the grace of Jesus Christ to bring conversion, while also bringing communities together to grow in spiritual formation.

This project desired to turn the focus back to singing as a way of spiritual formation to encourage community growth and unity. Through teaching biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary research, the activity of learning and singing together in this workshop refocused on the reason the Christian community is called to sing together. Through learning the shared purpose of singing praises and prayers as a new unifying focus of inviting the Holy Spirit to fill the community, this spiritual formation was revisited to equip the believers with the power of God to be filled with grace that transforms.

The biblical foundation was highlighted in the letter of Paul to the early church in Ephesians 5. This chapter emphasizes the way that believers must be wise and walk in a way to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Singing to the Lord with one another the spiritual songs of praise provide a way in which the Holy Spirit engages within the community and brings a common bond while lifting praise, and devotion to the Lord.

The Psalms provided a way in which the Jewish people sang together as they shared the same journey of faith and diaspora throughout their history. Their prayers were set to music and chanting as their daily practice was to sing of God's providence. Ephesians 5:14 was a hymn of the early Christian church. "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you:" This was the song sung to call the sinner to awake from the death which comes from unrepentant sin, and to let the light of Christ to shine on you and bring His eternal life and grace.

The historical foundation turns toward Charles Wesley and the method of his upbringing shared with his brother John. The Methodist movement that emerged from the spiritual practices of these two brothers was handed down to them by the intentional practice of their mother Susanna. The singing of Psalms twice a day was required of the brothers and their other siblings, as well as intentional teaching of theology and faithful practice from their mother. Charles leans back into this method of his faith at Oxford and asks his brother to come and lead a group that comes together and adheres to these methods of formation together.

The brothers' experience of frustration and failure in missionary work in Georgia led to their return to England, but on their journey to the American colonies, they

experienced the Moravians, a Christian community whose faith relied on the practice of prayer and singing as a continual practice.

In the year after his return to England, there is a turning point when Charles is bedridden from sickness and John and some friends come to sing hymns over Charles a sway of prayer to bring healing. This intentional act of spiritual practice and faith brings Charles to the conversion of the new birth and is followed by his brother experiencing the same assurance days later. The intentional practice invited the Holy Spirit to bring conversion and assurance to the two brothers which would bring revival. Charles wrote hymns on the doctrine and theology, and John implemented a system of class and band meetings that inherited from the Moravian community they both encountered. Together, they preach to those who are forgotten and neglected in society and lead a new movement of God through the Holy Spirit. Singing to the community is a foundational aspect that grounds the participants in faith and doctrine through common tunes with words of praise and belief.

The theological foundation picks up with the lyrical theology of Charles, as his hymns are infused with a scripturally based expression that serves as a cohesive tool to unite the communities that are being formed by the Wesley brothers. Charles and John are still ordained ministers of the Church of England, but they are engaged in a Holy Spirit movement that has caught fire and brought revival to the church outside its usual institutional walls.

The forces of societal influence of the time in the age of Enlightenment still hold power over the world but are being countered by the Methodist movement, where the Wesleys are preaching and singing of conversion and grace outside of the church walls.

The tunes that were utilized were popular tunes of the eighteenth century, and they stll hold popularity, and at times modern music of this time is being utilized for faith formation. The project emphasizes within this foundation the need to be unified in the message of singing praises and not the preference of style. This part of the project was intentional because of the problem statement was the context experienced conflict and loss of song preference.

Ritual Theory served as the final foundation utilized for this project. Emile Durkheim and his early study of ritual at the end of the nineteenth century focused on the solidarity and unity that is derived from the ceremonial acts of ritual. Durkheim designates the effects of religious activity in the community to be the key to the church. His study emphasizes the social construct of ritual in the community. He believed that the unit of the community as it comes together in its values and cause creates a bond.

Randall Collins built upon Durkheim's work and developed his theory of interaction ritual theory, which is the theory that this project has drawn its focus. Interaction ritual focuses on the chains of emotional energy that bond the community with shared values and purpose. The emotional energy that occurs in the ritual activity develops chains that bond the community in unity and solidarity. This interdisciplinary tool brings the intentional focus of singing in the community to each other as a way of creating unity in the act of singing, as a way of breaking down barriers of preference and focusing on shared purpose to change the distorted focus of preference.

The foundational blocks of this project build upon one another to create a workshop experience that teaches the participants the need for corporate unity in song to bring fellowship. They must invite the Holy Spirit to fill the space of worship, and

eliminate division, while encouraging people to sing, instead of performing or not participating in an essential part of worship. The biblical foundation will inform the members of the shared history of the song as a call to praise all of God's followers, to invite the Holy Spirit into the worship space and indwell in the community. The historical foundation provides an example of the results of the intentional spiritual practice of singing together as a prayer for healing and new birth. The theological foundation reminds the participants of the need for unified belief in the words that are sung and the instructions of doctrine through the hymnody of the Wesleyan Methodist movement from its birth to the present. Finally, the interdisciplinary foundation will provide the cohesive results of singing together as a spiritual practice to garner a space of growth in faith as a community.

Methodology

Sing Your Praise to the Lord: A Workshop on Congregational Singing consisted of six in-person one and a half hour sessions held at the context of Derby Global Methodist Church. The workshops were held on Monday evenings from 6:30-8 P.M. consecutively from September 16 to October 21, 2024. Thirteen members of the Derby Global Methodist Church community participated in the workshops. The weekly workshops were selected with seven-day intervals to allow the participants to reflect weekly on the material in regular weekly worship with the larger faith community as well as written reflection.

The workshop sessions began each week with a five-minute time of singing well-known hymns and choruses followed by a prayer to open the session. Next, a lecture was

shared on the weekly topic for thirty minutes, followed by ten minutes of small group discussion. The entire group would discuss their answers to the reflections with the full session for fifteen minutes. After a short five-minute break, all participants would sing together for twenty minutes of hymns and praise choruses in unison. The session would end 4each time with a final thought by the leader with a journal prompt encourage the participants into the week ahead of journaling, reflections, as well answering further questions about the material presented.

Four different qualitative research methods were used to gather data for this project. The participants registered for the workshop study and on the first day of the session filled out and signed a consent form to participate and took a pre-survey of eleven questions about the subject of the course. Everyone had a number assigned to their written work that identified them anonymously throughout the study. This number served to track the growth and knowledge of each participant as they engaged in the study.

Pre-survey

The pre-survey consisted of eleven questions that asked about their knowledge of terms used in the course, as well as questions about music preference and attitudes towards singing in worship settings defined as weekly Sunday morning worship at Derby Global Methodist Church.

Post-Survey

At the end of the last session, the post-survey was handed out to participants, where the same eleven questions were asked again. This provided an opportunity for the

participants to define terms learned from the project, as well as different attitudes or approaches to singing in worship.

Weekly Journal Prompts

The participants were given a weekly journal prompt in the form of a question at the end of sessions one to five to be completed outside of class time while at home in the seven days between each session. This question asked for deeper reflection on each weekly subject, as well as developing approaches and thoughts to singing in worship for each person, as they reflected on their own life experience and preferences and approach to singing as a way of expressing their faith.

Personal Interview Questions

After the last session, the participants were allowed to participate in a personal interview. The participants who desired to be interviewed were given contact information to reach out to the principal investigator to be held later in the two weeks following the last session. The interview questions approached qualitative answers to the efficacy of the workshop to redirect the focus of congregational singing as a way of unity in prayer and praise.

Implementation

"Sing Your Praise to the Lord" was promoted in the weekly Sunday worship bulletin at Derby Global Methodist Church starting on August 25, 2024, and continued through the day before the first session, Sunday, September 15, 2024. Upon registering,

participants were invited to attend all sessions and participate in journal entries at home each week.

Session One

The first session began on September 16, 2024, at 6:30 P.M. (EST). The participants filled out consent forms and pre-surveys after a prayer to open the session. The first lecture focused on the proposed statement of the project "Corporate Singing as an Intentional Spiritual Practice that creates space for Holy Spirit Encounter." To open the first session two opening questions were added to the original proposed project plan. This variance was to open the theme of the study to bring unity in singing as a spiritual practice. The participants were asked the introductory question "What is a song sung about God, church, and faith that everybody knows?" After feedback, a follow-up question was asked: "Who answered Amazing Grace?" This led as an opening theme of unity of song to the first lecture.

An abbreviated biography of the hymn writer John Newton was shared as it led to the writing of this well-known hymn. The story of unity that Amazing Grace brought to a recovery group two centuries later in the 1970s was utilized to present the group with the power of a specific song that unites. This opened the lecture towards introducing the project proposal hypothesis and dissecting each part to be highlighted in the weekly workshops.

Corporate singing was presented as how the community is called together within worship and in other gatherings. The faith communities of the Old and New Testament were highlighted in their practice of singing together using the Psalms as their songs from

scripture specifically. These songs were learned orally and memorized by all believers in worship and as they made journeys to festivals and as corporate prayers of the community.

Intentionality was presented as how an individual, or community can plan for a desired outcome by putting to practice or choosing a way to implement singing to create the environment of worship and community through praising God in song. This intentionality is planned to invite God in by choosing songs and ways of singing for the result desired. Defining spiritual practices and their importance to spiritual growth was presented. Focusing on singing in worship as a practice that can grow the community was examined. Participants were presented with the example of a congregation in England that chose to not have solo singing anymore, but to include the congregation in all the responses and singing liturgy to encourage a new way of singing in worship. The lecture ended with the challenge to return to congregational singing as a practice that unites and bonds the community.

The first journal entry was given to the participants to begin the practice of responding to prompts by writing in their journals. Next, there was a small group discussion and then brought to the larger gathering. The session ended at 8:00 P.M. to introduce the foundational elements of the hypothesis to focus on unity in corporate singing as an intentional spiritual practice to make space for a Holy Spirit encounter.

Session Two

Session Two began at 6:30 P.M. (EST) on September 23, 2024, with an opening prayer and singing “Amazing Grace” again in unison without accompaniment. The

original approach to using musical instruments to accompany the participants was changed after the first session when a Capela singing matched the intention of the project to bring voices together in unison without distraction.

The second lecture focused on sharing the Biblical Foundation of singing. A passage was read and examined with instruction from the Apostle Paul. The passage of Ephesians 5: 15-20 was dissected for direction of how a believer is to walk wisely, take advantage of the time, not be foolish, but understand the will of God, not be drunk, but be filled with the Holy Spirit This is the foundational call of the community to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs among one another. The emphasis made by Paul was highlighted to be singing in unity praise songs in whatever form to God.

A discussion question was asked of small groups made of two or three participants for five minutes, then shared with a larger discussion for ten minutes. Session Two closed with the participants singing in community refrains and choruses that were printed on small papers to be chosen by the participants to be led by someone starting the song and inviting others to naturally join in and sing along. The choruses that were chosen were from songs of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis of the Holy Spirit was shared as an intentional choice for the closing of these sessions to point towards inviting the Holy Spirit into the community of the workshop as they sang together these specific songs.

Session Three

Session Three began at 6:30 P.M. (EST) on Monday, September 30, 2024, at Derby Global Methodist Church. After an opening prayer, the session opened with

singing a contemporary version of Amazing Grace by Chris Tomlin. This version adds a contemporary chorus to the original lyrics and tune. This choice was intentional to bridge the gap between a classic hymn and a modern interpretation.

The third lecture was focused on the historical foundation of the hypothesis. The Historical foundation centered on Charles Wesley was presented mostly from the primary sources of his personal journals and from his mother's personal writings of correspondence throughout her life. Writings from Susanna Wesley was shared that reflected her concern that each movement in her children's days should be planned out with practice of faith. The singing of the psalms in the morning and evening was implemented for all her children. This practice along with other intentional learned spiritual practice would be formational for Charles and his brother John, and served as a foundational practice that would bring both brothers to spiritual conversion, which fueled the Holy Spirit became the Wesleyan Methodist in England and expanded to the American Colonies and then the United States.

Charles conversion story through his journal entries was shared as it tells of his brother John and friends visiting him at his lowest in physical and mental health. As noted in Charles journal John and the two friends sang hymns of prayer over Charles. He becomes moved in the Holy Spirit. Within a day, Charles has his conversion moment and notes it in his journal on Pentecost Sunday, May 21, 1738.

Session Four

Session Four began at 6:30 P.M. (EST) on Monday, October 7, 2024, at Derby GMC. The session opened with prayer and group singing of praise choruses and hymns

from the hymnal. The fourth lecture was focused on the theological foundation of corporate singing. Lyrical theology was presented as a sung theology with examples of the theological concepts found in Charles Wesley's hymns. The theological terms found in the hymns of the movement penned by Charles were taught and identified to the participants. These terms covered soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and trinitarian theology.

The participants engaged together as the larger group looked through hymns and praise songs and identified theological aspects of the lyrics. The participants found themes and learned about the Singstunde of the Moravians. This group chose a theme for singing songs together when they gathered. They were a strong influence on the Wesley brothers and their movement.

Session Five

Session Five began at 6:30 P.M. (EST) on Monday, October 14, 2024, at Derby GMC. The workshop opened with prayer, and group singing of hymn choruses and praise songs. The lecture portion of the session introduced ritual theory as an interdisciplinary study that intersects with corporate singing in worship. The lecture used source material from Emile Durkheim on Ceremonial Rituals. Interaction ritual theory was presented as an example of how the ritual ingredients of community interactions bring ritual outcomes through various studies. This was introduced as the formula of ritual that can be utilized to be intentional in corporate singing. It was suggested that when the ritual theory practice is utilized and observed the desired outcomes of unity in an assembly of persons

with mutual focus and shared mood and values can emerge through singing the worship setting.

The group engaged in discussion as a large group to reflect on the benefits of utilizing this information to bring unity in singing together in the context of weekly in worship. The session ended with singing choruses from praise songs and hymns from a handout that was provided with the lyrics of twenty songs. The community was led by the participants to start singing as each person felt led to lead the group in acapella group singing. This closing activity lasted for ten minutes with each person in the group taking a turn naturally to start a new song to sing together.

Session Six

The final workshop began at 6:30 P.M. (EST) on Monday, October 21, 2024, at Derby GMC. Participants sang together known hymns and praise songs to begin the session. The leader chose songs that had been repeated throughout the workshop, "Amazing Grace" and "Sanctuary," to begin the session. These two pieces were chosen as two different songs known by all participants by memory that were written 3 centuries apart for the exercise of uniting the group one more time at this last session.

The final lecture was a lesson on what is a Rule of Life, and how can it be applied to the faith community at Derby GMC. The teaching was how to develop a Rule of Life for a plan for singing as a way of refocusing others in the larger congregation on the intentional spiritual practice to make space for the Holy Spirit. There was a discussion time two give the group time to develop these first steps of planning. The participants

filled out their post surveys, which was followed with fifteen minutes of singing together before ending this final installment of the project.

Summary of Learning

The hypothesis of focusing on corporate singing as an intentional spiritual practice that creates space for Holy Spirit Encounter was successful as participants engaged in learning and singing together as ten participants attended and finished the activities for six weeks together. The workshop was completed with results from pre- and post-surveys, journal entries, and weekly discussions, as well group singing together weekly as a faith community.

Survey results

All ten of the participants who completed the surveys were members of Derby GMC and attended worship regularly as outlined in the qualifications of the project. Each of the questions in the pre- and post-surveys asked for qualitative data about corporate singing, spiritual practice, intentionality, and new terms to be explored through the study. The questions were repeated to analyze the information to be taught and to gauge the attitude and perspective of participants of singing in worship to achieve the hypothesis of moving the focus of congregational singing back to unified singing to worship and pray to the Lord through singing together taking the emphasis off a preference of style or performance.

Question one asked: “What is your favorite hymn or praise song?” This question was put at the beginning of the survey for the participants to share their favorite song of

faith. Three songs of the responses were written in the twenty-first century, two were written in the twentieth century, two were written in the nineteenth century, and two were written in the eighteenth century. This shows a diverse number of years starting with 1739 to 2019 of the songs that are preferred by the group as the study begins. The responses in the post surveys do not change for the participants.

Question two asked: Are you more connected to a song when you know it? If yes, are you willing to learn a new song in worship? These pair of questions together were asked to gauge if the participant would be willing to learn something new in worship and if engagement with God was not dependent on knowledge of a song.

One hundred percent of the participants replied that they were connected to a song when they knew it. For the second part of the question, the responses varied on the presurvey. Five out of the ten participants answered yes to the pre-survey. Two of the yes replies were followed with "Yes, I love new songs," and "Yes, always." Two of the no responses were followed with these responses; "No, we need to sing songs over and over for them to have meaning," and "I enjoy old favorites I know the most." There were two problematic responses that did not answer the question clearly: "Yes, if I know them" and "Depends on the song."

The post-survey answers brought the ten out of ten participants to respond yes to being connected to a song they knew, and nine out of ten said that they would learn a new song. One post-survey response stated that the placement of a new song should not be at the end of the service.

Question three asked: Are you comfortable singing a prayer? This question is to address teaching in lecture two about the Shema, which is a Jewish prayer that is sung.

Half of the ten surveyed responded yes, with one participant noting that in this participant's Christian tradition, they sang prayers regularly. One participant noted that many of the hymns were developed from the psalms that were prayers. The other half of the responses consisted of three participants stating that they were not sure and never did sing a prayer, one response was "could be if set to a familiar chorus," and another stated, "It depends if I know the tempo or the tune." The post-survey revealed ten out of ten yes responses to this question.

Question four asked: Does singing in church connect you to God? This question was asked to reveal if the participants feel connected to God when they sing in worship, because of the intention of the proposed hypothesis to refocus why one sings in church.

All ten participants responded yes to this question on the pre-survey. There were added responses to the question that were important to note. Two respondents noted: "Definitely, it is a very important way to worship God" and "I have always felt that I hear God more through music than just reading scripture or praying" with a positive and eager approach. Two other participants added these comments to their yes: "if familiar" and "however, if I don't know the song it is distracting to me to connect to God" with a hesitant and contingent response for song choice. The post surveys had all yes responses with no added comments. The value did not change, and yet the concerns and drawbacks were withdrawn after the study.

Question five asked: Does singing in church connect you to the worship community? This question approaches the connected place of the faith community to engage in spiritual practice together. The subject of the added responses was of importance: especially when you can hear others singing" and "when we sing together,

we share our common faith with one another." One person noted that they started singing in church, and it is their safe place. The post-surveys revealed unanimous yes responses.

Question six asked: Is song preference important in worship? This question is intended to gauge the preference of a type of song participants like over another specifically to hymns or contemporary praise songs. The responses brought about confusion over the question as some participants responded about worship themes and the matching of songs to scriptural themes or themes throughout the year. So, the answers were yes directed to theme and not type of song. Two comments to note from the pre-survey before addressing song choice and style in the lectures and workshops were "I do think it has impact because of what people like to sing in worship, but in the end it doesn't matter" and "I lean towards contemporary songs, but will sing hymns."

The post-survey responses were all yes again and reinforced the theme but not a song type. This reinforces the material but should have been introduced more specifically in the question for a different outcome. Question seven asked; "Are all hymns in the hymnal connected to scripture?" Question eight asked: Are all praise songs connected to Christianity? These two questions were asked to have the participants speculate on the validity of the songs that are sung in worship as correct and compatible doctrine and theology for the church.

On hymns: six responses were "most are," two speculated "I think so," and the remaining two responded with a definite "yes." On praise songs: four responses were "yes," one "no," one "should be," one "I believe so," one "Not always," one "for the most part," and one "the ones I know are." The post-survey responses revealed that the participants are split five yes and five no on the hymns being compatible with scripture,

and seven out of ten believing that all praise songs are not compatible with correct theology.

Question nine asked: What is the Shema? This question was asked because of the teaching that was planned in lecture two for the Biblical foundation workshop. Only one person out of the ten participants knew it was a Jewish prayer from scripture. In the post-survey, eight out of ten answered correctly. Question ten asked: What is a Rule of Life? This also was a question about teaching for a session. Half of the participants left it blank in the presurvey, while the other half answered with what is known as the golden rule which is Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. In the past surveys, seven out of the ten answered correctly.

Question eleven asked: Name two or more spiritual practices that can be done with others. This question speaks to the focus of the project to reintroduce congregational singing as a spiritual practice that builds and strengthens a group in faith through spiritual practice together. The question intentionally asks about spiritual practices done in a group. Nine out of the ten responses were prayer, singing, communion, or a form of Bible study for this question in the pre-survey. Only one person responded differently with “do good, do no harm, and love God and others.” This final response is derived from the person’s knowledge of the three simple rules from John Wesley for the people of the Methodist movement in the eighteenth century. In the post-survey results, clarity was found for this one participant as ten out of ten responses were prayer, singing, Bible study, or Communion.

Question twelve asked: What does it mean to be intentional as a person of faith? This serves as a question about being deliberate in faithful action. The participants all

responded with a correct and clear understanding of intentionality. This question was omitted from the post-survey in error but is addressed in the discussion portion results of the workshops.

Personal Journals

Personal journals were given out at the first session to be used to answer prompts given each week by the project administrator. In the first session, the first prompt was given after the lecture to practice writing thoughts and to start a discussion with the group. The first prompt was: Explain how you feel connected to your faith as you sing. This set the precedence of the study as participants answered the question and shared in small groups of two to three, and then with the larger group. One participant became emotional as she shared about the hymn Amazing Grace and how this hymn was a foundational part of family relationships that connected her to God.

R4 wrote that singing leads one to think about their faith, and R3 can relate to the lyrics as she goes about her day and lifts her when she can relate her faith journey to the message of the song. R5 shared that even though they are not much of a singer singing as a young person in church brought a connection to her faith which made a difference in her life. R8 shared that singing songs of faith allows them to let go of everything else to praise God and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to them.

R9 answers that singing stirs the Spirit within them to draw closer to God. They feel an awakening in the soul and feel directed by the words that are sung. R12 feels connected to God and the people around when singing in worship. R13 states that some songs bring back memories from the past and that this is assuring in their faith. R10 feels

connected to hymns and the stories behind the hymn writers and their experiences. She feels connected to Horatio Spafford's "It is Well with My Soul," and she recites the story of his loss of his children that prompted him to write the hymn.

The spiritual formation of each of the individual participants was shared through their responses to "Share a praise song or hymn that you heard or sung as a child that shaped your faith." R12 shared that the song "Pass it On" shaped her faith through her youth group and was formative to her faith helping her to feel close to God and the other members of her youth group. R13 shared that "Silent Night" has been an emotional song for him since childhood. R10 felt connected to songs her mom learned at camp and shared with the family when she was young. She learned these songs from her mother while traveling to a summer cottage and she still treasures them today in her faith.

R3 shares in her journal that "He Touched Me" resonated with her in her childhood and she felt God knew her which resonates with her still today. R2 and R5 both shared that the song "The B.I.B.L.E" was a song they learned as children that taught them about God's word as foundational for their faith. R4 shares that "When the Roll is Called up Yonder" was a hymn that challenged her singing, but that the words in the chorus spoke to her.

With every prompt each week there was also an invitation to reflect on the weekly workshops and the problems with getting everyone to sing that was discussed after the lectures. R12 shared about a time in the history of the church when a paid music professional planned and organized the worship music for both services and had the musical expertise to lead and teach singable songs and enhance the music program. She shared how this was a good time in the life of the music of the church. People sang more

and participated in congregational singing at a different level. R10 shared that the hymns speak to all parts of worship and shared about a favorite writer, Natalie Sleeth, from the late twentieth century who writes for young people and has a simplistic way of writing about faith in God in her music that speaks to this participant.

Four participants wrote about singing in a large gathering and experiencing the unity and presence of the Holy Spirit when they were singing in the large gathering. For R12 it was a woman of faith conference, R1 shared a special experience of being part of a youth play performed at a youth convention where the theme was "Take My Life and Let it Be" and this hymn was sung, and R13 shared about singing "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" at the annual conference of the church denomination. She shared that at the time it was moving with "thousands of voices actually singing together praises in the midst of meetings."

Workshop Discussions

The workshop discussions each week centered around questions of what keeps the congregation from singing and coming together to sing and pray together. The gathered participants discussed the concerns and then came up with solutions and made intentional plans for a rule of life at the last session to bring the learnings from the workshops into solving the problem. The challenges and concerns of corporate singing were discussed over five of the six sessions.

- Lack of knowing songs.
- Sing ability of some songs (hymns and praise songs).
- Families of little children can be distracted.

- Not being able to see or hear impedes the older members when singing.
- Feeling self-conscious.
- Believing you are not a good singer, and that talented people are the only ones who should sing.

Ideas were developed for intentional corporate singing as a spiritual practice for the context. The participants began thinking of a Rule of Life for the church to be continued beyond the workshop experience.

- Sing carols at the Christmas dinner.
- Sing Easter songs at the Easter Breakfast.
- Sing acapella choruses at the beginning of worship before anything else happens on Sunday mornings.
- Begin a practice of singing at the opening of all meetings or gatherings of the faith community.
- Teach new songs and choruses over a specified time for people to learn new songs and choose singable hymns or praise songs.

Post workshop Interviews

A list of eight questions were asked in a one-on-one post-workshop interview format for six out of the ten participants. The interview portion of the study was optional for the participants. These questions were yes or no, and multiple-choice answers that evaluated the three areas of each workshop and how they affected their viewpoints and attitudes after the sessions. The three areas were: presentation, singing, and fellowship.

1. How have the workshops changed your perspective on singing in worship?

01-No, Commented: The material reinforced what I already knew about singing in worship.

02- Yes,

03- Yes

05-Yes, commented: Learning the background of why we sing was good.

06-Yes, commented: I now understand the important role of singing in worship.

07- Yes, commented: I now pay more attention to what I am singing.

2. Did you feel connected to the group during the singing portion of the workshops? Yes or no. Was it different or the same as worship on Sunday mornings? 1. Same, 2. Different, 3. New.

01- yes, 2. different

02- yes, 2. different

03- yes, 2, different

05-yes, 2. different

06 Yes, 2. different

07 Yes, 2. different, commented: We tried new things.

3. Which part of the workshops connected you to God? 1. Presentations, 2. Singing, 3. Fellowship, (select as many as apply)

01-All 1,2,3

02- 1, 2, 3

03- 2,3

05- 2,3

06- 2,3

07- all 1,2,3

4. Which part of the workshops connected you to other participants? 1. Presentations, 2. Singing, 3. Fellowship (select as many as apply)

01- 2,3, especially in the discussions

02-2.3

03-2,3

05-all

06- all

07-all

5. Did you feel more comfortable with songs and styles you didn't know at the end of the course? 1. Yes, 2. No. Explain your answer.

01-yes

02-yes

03-yes

05-yes

06-yes

07-yes

6. Do you have a new perspective on unknown hymns and/or worship songs?

01-Not necessarily new

02- yes

03-yes

05-yes

06-yes

07-yes

7. Are you more aware of what you are singing in worship due to this course?

01-same

02-yes

03- yes, commented: We are united when we are singing.

05-yes

06-yes

07-yes

8. Due to this course, are you more aware of others singing beside you? Does this bring you more connection to the group?

01-Yes, yes

02- yes, yes

03- yes, yes

05- yes, yes

06-yes, yes

07- yes, yes

Analysis

The findings point to trends that were revealed across all the data collected. The pre- and post-surveys revealed that the participants learned the new terms that connected to the workshops and grasped the importance of theological and scriptural connection and accuracy to the songs that are sung in worship. The participants also responded to the connection to God through music and to each other on Sunday mornings and how this is important to the faith community.

The act of weekly journaling with prompts and writing reflections on the weekly workshops brought revealing aspects of reigniting and revealing the connection to God, each other, and the Holy Spirit through recounting how singing brought faith formation in the participant's personal experience. Four of the participants mentioned in their writings significant connections to a large group of believers at a special gathering while singing hymns and praise songs. These participants shared that it was uplifting and that they explained the movement of God through that connection to the gathering.

All ten participants touched on childhood memories and spiritual formation through singing in Sunday school, connections with family, youth groups, and worship services that were significant. Each of these experiences was matched with a specific song that connected the participant to that time and their faith.

Of the six participants that were interviewed, only one did not have their perspective changed about singing, and that participant believed in the information and

stated that the workshops reaffirmed her knowledge, experience, and hope for music and connection to the Holy Spirit in worship.

The hypothesis of refocusing corporate singing as an intentional spiritual practice that creates space for Holy Spirit encounters was met through the workshop "Sing Your Praise to the Lord." The workshops not only disseminated the information but also created an environment for the participants to sing together different types of hymns and praise choruses together each week.

One hundred percent of those interviewed answered that they felt connected to God, and each other, and felt more comfortable with new types of songs. Five out of the six gained a new perspective on the importance of singing together as a spiritual practice and an opportunity for unity and growth within the faith community.

The overall findings of the analysis confirmed that the participants engaged and found new knowledge of the background of singing in the collective history of the church and how it serves as an important aspect of spiritual growth for the faith community to bring healing, restoration, and will bring revival to the gospel message and world as it has done in the past.

Conclusion

The six-week workshop of Sing Your Praise to The Lord: Corporate Singing as an Intentional Spiritual Practice that Creates Space for Holy Spirit Encounter fulfilled the hypothesis to refocus congregational singing and bring unity. The unifying experience and connection became the center point for the study as the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations were shared and examined. The throughline

of why the faith community is called to sing together to bring connection and unity was embraced and experienced through the workshop which was informative and interactive.

The study reignited memories of a time when people sang in large settings and felt the presence of God. Participants were able to revisit their faith journey through music in their past and reconnect to that spiritual formation they already experienced, this allowed them to connect with the group each week on shared experiences and find that connection again in their current context.

The study reminded the participants of the spiritual formation of their youth and how that affected their faith. Sharing within the journal format allowed the participants to open up beyond the workshop setting and dig into their connection to singing with others. Some participants wrote out a whole song that connected to them in their current situations and how they needed this lifting experience to remember that music connects them to God and encountering it in a faith group is bonding and uniting.

The study unveiled shared experiences of being connected to God through special worship or experience with those who shaped their faith who sang in the community and brought them there: weekly nights of worship with a family member, Sunday worship when groups sang before studies and connected to a cottage and on a trip where their mother sang and taught them those songs. These experiences brought out an eagerness to experience that connection again and confirmand that God calls the faith community to this connection for rejuvenation and continued connection to God, who heals conflicts and pain through music.

The study brought about comments from one participant who recounted how the music was presented in the past when the numbers were greater, and they had

professional people leading the music. This brought a realization that the disconnect is still present because the conflict that divided the congregation emerged and took the larger gathering and the resources for congregational music away. The resource of a professionally trained employee who took the lead with choosing, teaching, and leading the music ministry to have that connection and unity had left as well as a large part of another service that eventually folded when half of the congregation left the church.

These comments were significant to the reason for the workshops and is what led to the hypothesis that was created to intersect the problem that still exists and the fallout from the conflict. This served as a reminder of why the numbers are not the problem, but the unity of singing despite preferences of the style of music and leaning more into spiritual practice and growth in that area despite the congregation size.

The study brought unity as the participants sang together known choruses of hymns and praise songs by memory most of the time. The weekly discussions of the community along with acapella singing stripped away performance and extra concerns of books and words and brought connection and the beginnings of a new way of refocusing the direction of singing and corporate music.

I found as I approached the workshops that the simpler approach to singing together without accompaniment was easier to plan and brought surprising unity. It stripped down the experience to just the raw voices singing together and suggesting known songs that the community could suggest and find the rhythms and notes together. This unity enabled a comfortable and non-evasive atmosphere that encouraged vulnerability, engagement, and connectedness.

Discovery for Future Implementation

My discoveries in planning and implementing this project were informative for future implementation. I changed the format to no accompaniment, and I believe that this benefitted the study. If there was a longer period of study, perhaps different accompaniments would open the conversation to preferences of how music is presented and break down those barriers by experiencing different styles of music.

I originally planned to have different songs to learn each week with new styles of singing that were unknown to all. I changed my direction on this part of the workshop, as I discovered in the first session when the group discussed their experience that the focus needed to be directed to just the style and differences that are already known in the community. The differences between contemporary music, praise songs, and hymns were enough for the study to accomplish its intent. The focus of this was on the origin of the conflict that needed to be mended.

I discovered that some of the participants already brought an experience of spiritual formation through music that I possessed and that this would lead the conversation and bring out sharing and participation. I would add more discussion on certain topics around singing and past experiences for the participants to learn more about why different music moves each of them.

I would define preference more specifically to be about a style preference of music in worship and not about the theme of the worship that is chosen with songs that support that theme. This term was confusing for nine out of the ten participants and I was surprised by that discovery. I believe if it was more defined then the topic of preference

could have been explored and brought out to be addressed within reflections, discussions, and post-surveys.

There is more to the discussion of singing and its connection and to examine to bring communities together in unity through the music of the church. This subject needs additional study and the work of Charles Wesley and his experience and theological discourse through his hymns can bring connection and renewal through the Holy Spirit to connect and revive the movement of the gospel and incur renewal through the Holy Spirit. The statement from one of my participants on the first day drives me to continue this study forward and that is “I want more people to sing.”

God gave us His words, His song, and His tune to sing the story of salvation and grace and tune our hearts and others to His promise. Perhaps then thousands of tongues will sing our great redeemer’s praise with the saints and in the whole world to sing along.

O for a thousand tongues to sing

my great Redeemer's praise,

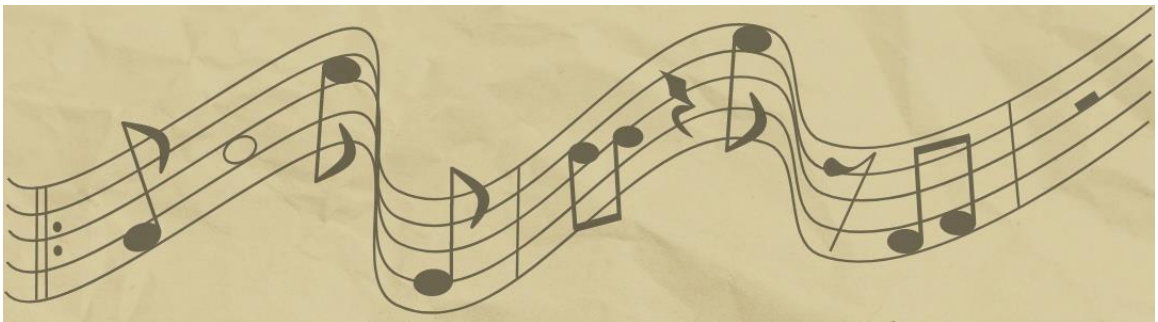
the glories of my God and King,

the triumphs of his grace!

-Charles Wesley 173

APPENDIX A

PROMOTIONAL FLYER



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- **Learning new songs and ways to sing together**
- **A new focus to make space for the Holy Spirit to renew, and revive the church.**

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